

Black Revolutionaries in the United States
Communist Interventions, Volume II

Communist Research Cluster

2016

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Capitalism cannot reform itself; it is doomed to self-destruction. No universal selfishness can bring social good to all. Communism—the effort to give all men what they need and to ask of each the best they can contribute—this is the only way of human life... In the end communism will triumph.
I want to help bring that day.

W.E.B. Du Bois

This is the second installation of the *Communist Interventions* series, following up on the first volume which addresses European socialism and communism. The third volume, which incidentally has already been released, concerns revolutionary feminism. Further volumes on other subjects should follow, as well. We hope that these readers will provide the foundation for seminars and reading groups.

No person in the United States can deny that Black liberation remains a pressing issue today. The unrest in Baltimore, Ferguson, etc. underscores the persistent social ills in the USA that Blacks have been unable to escape. The task of attempting to address these grievances within a revolutionary tradition is also—however less well-known—not a new phenomenon. Radical groupings within the USA have grappled with how to emancipate American Blacks from their oppression even prior to the Russian Revolution, although the Bolsheviks’ attempt to export revolution around the globe unquestionably accelerated these efforts. It is this history which we present in the current volume, through primary sources.

Readers might have seen an early version of this document which leaked online. We are releasing this version now, even if it retains rough edges in some areas, since it contains many improvements over the former in layout, editorial content and copy-editing. We do intend to modify and reorganize the content to be more thematically consistent, and will release an improved document in the future. Indeed, we do intend to incrementally improve the first volume as well (and, presumably, other future volumes) over time in response to feedback. Nevertheless, the enthusiastic reaction that we did receive regarding the leaked version only confirmed our belief that a widely-shared hunger for this kind of project exists.

The title of this volume was initially “The Black Radical Tradition” but, after discussions regarding the focus and purpose of the work we have decided to opt for “Black Revolutionaries in the United States” instead. Since the reading selections are, thus far, almost identical to the original document, the title is a bit misleading, if broadly applicable. Nevertheless, we are sticking with the new title for volume two, which gives an indication of the content changes we intend to make in the next release.

These readings were initially compiled for the purpose of running reading groups in Oakland, California and Brooklyn, New York. The crowd that came together, we believe, generally set the standard for a sincere, serious and informed discussion of communist history. The people assembled came from a variety of generational, racial and political backgrounds, and those that stayed through to the end (an unusually high percentage of participants for a reading group, in our experience) were unanimous in their acclaim of the group’s social dynamics.

One of the goals of releasing this document is to provide the material for others to replicate this informative experience where they are situated. We have added a section to the CRC website which provides guidelines on how this can be done autonomously. We have also added a page expounding on the rationale for the *Communist Interventions* series.

Some may be surprised at the preponderance of the readings which feature groups and ideologies that tout some form of anti-revisionist communism as a polestar. We agree that there are aspects of this milieu that have fallen out of fashion. Regardless, for better or worse, most of the communist groups in the United States that did take issues of Black oppression seriously after the unraveling of the American Communist Party in the 1950s did anchor their theoretical foundations in anti-revisionist thought.

One weakness that this volume has vis-à-vis the previous one is the lack of a companion text that provides the historical background for the debates contained herein. The best approximation that we have found is Ahmed Shawki’s short book *Black Liberation and Socialism* (Haymarket Books, 2006),

but its contents do not align exactly with this volume's themes. We can only encourage readers to do their own research to fill in the gaps (see the further reading section for some suggestions).

On that topic, we must again thank Marxists Internet Archive (marxists.org) for providing amazing resources for radicals interested in delving into Marxist history. In particular, the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line section contains a wealth of documentation relating to anti-revisionist parties and ideologies. We have again sourced much of this volume's content from the Marxists Internet Archive website.

We hope that the present reader helps to inch us towards solving what Harry Chang described as the "real task" facing us: "how to respond to the call of Black Liberation, not how to accommodate it somehow into some dingy cellar of specialization."

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Week 1

Slavery And Capitalism

W.E.B. Du Bois was one of America's most prominent Black intellectuals and famous early civil rights activists. The first African-American to receive a doctorate at Harvard, he went on to help found the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and serve as the only Black member of its first executive board.

Du Bois' political positions were constantly changing, but for most of his life he positioned himself against fellow Black public figure Booker T. Washington's philosophy of achieving the betterment of Blacks' conditions via accommodation to the existing power structure. Du Bois' book *The Souls of Black Folk* fired the opening shots of this ongoing battle between the two men.

This week's reading is taken from Du Bois' work *Black Reconstruction*. The purpose of this book was to reframe the post-Civil War Reconstruction era as one of relative freedom and democracy for Blacks, rescuing the historiography of the period from the then-dominant interpretation of academics who sympathized with conservative Southern forces. The first three chapters, presented here, give a sociological overview of the antebellum South.

1.1 W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction (1935)

I. The Black Worker

How black men, coming to America in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, became a central thread in the history of the United States, at once a challenge to its democracy and always an important part of its economic history and social development

Easily the most dramatic episode in American history was the sudden move to free four million black slaves in an effort to stop a great civil war, to end forty years of bitter controversy, and to appease the moral sense of civilization.

From the day of its birth, the anomaly of slavery plagued a nation which asserted the equality of all men, and sought to derive powers of government from the consent of the governed. Within sound of the voices of those who said this lived more than half a million black slaves, forming nearly one-fifth of the population of a new nation.

The black population at the time of the first census had risen to three-quarters of a million, and there were over a million at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before 1830, the blacks had passed the two million mark, helped by the increased importations just before 1808, and the illicit

smuggling up until 1820. By their own reproduction, the Negroes reached 3,638,808 in 1850, and before the Civil War, stood at 4,441,830. They were 10% of the whole population of the nation in 1700, 22% in 1750, 18.9% in 1800 and 11.6% in 1900.

These workers were not all black and not all Africans and not all slaves. In 1860, at least 90% were born in the United States, 13% were visibly of white as well as Negro descent and actually more than one fourth were probably of white, Indian and Negro blood. In 1860, 11% of these dark folk were free workers.

In origin, the slaves represented everything African, although most of them originated on or near the West Coast. Yet among them appeared the great Bantu tribes from Sierra Leone to South Africa; the Sudanese, straight across the center of the continent, from the Atlantic to the Valley of the Nile; the Nilotic Negroes and the black and brown Hamites, allied with Egypt; the tribes of the great lakes; the Pygmies and the Hottentots; and in addition to these, distinct traces of both Berber and Arab blood. There is no doubt of the presence of all these various elements in the mass of 10,000,000 or more Negroes transported from Africa to the various Americas, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Most of them that came to the continent went through West Indian tutelage, and thus finally appeared in the United States. They brought with them their religion and rhythmic song, and some traces of their art and tribal customs. And after a lapse of two and one-half centuries, the Negroes became a settled working population, speaking English or French, professing Christianity, and used principally in agricultural toil. Moreover, they so mingled their blood with white and red America that today less than 25% of the Negro Americans are of unmixed African descent.

So long as slavery was a matter of race and color, it made the conscience of the nation uneasy and continually affronted its ideals. The men who wrote the Constitution sought by every evasion, and almost by subterfuge, to keep recognition of slavery out of the basic form of the new government. They founded their hopes on the prohibition of the slave trade, being sure that without continual additions from abroad, this tropical people would not long survive, and thus the problem of slavery would disappear in death. They miscalculated, or did not foresee the changing economic world. It might be more profitable in the West Indies to kill the slaves by overwork and import cheap Africans; but in America without a slave trade, it paid to conserve the slave and let him multiply. When, therefore, manifestly the Negroes were not dying out, there came quite naturally new excuses and explanations. It was a matter of social condition. Gradually these people would be free; but freedom could only come to the bulk as the freed were transplanted to their own land and country, since the living together of black and white in America was unthinkable. So again the nation waited, and its conscience sank to sleep.

But in a rich and eager land, wealth and work multiplied. They twisted new and intricate patterns around the earth. Slowly but mightily these black workers were integrated into modern industry. On free and fertile land Americans raised, not simply sugar as a cheap sweetening, rice for food and tobacco as a new and tickling luxury; but they began to grow a fiber that clothed the masses of a ragged world. Cotton grew so swiftly that the 9,000 bales of cotton which the new nation scarcely noticed in 1791 became 79,000 in 1800; and with this increase, walked economic revolution in a dozen different lines. The cotton crop reached one-half million bales in 1822, a million bales in 1831, two million in 1840, three million in 1852, and in the year of secession, stood at the then enormous total of five million bales.

Such facts and others, coupled with the increase of the slaves to which they were related as both cause and effect, meant a new world; and all the more so because with increase in American cotton and Negro slaves, came both by chance and ingenuity new miracles for manufacturing, and

particularly for the spinning and weaving of cloth.

The giant forces of water and of steam were harnessed to do the world's work, and the black workers of America bent at the bottom of a growing pyramid of commerce and industry; and they not only could not be spared, if this new economic organization was to expand, but rather they became the cause of new political demands and alignments, of new dreams of power and visions of empire.

First of all, their work called for widening stretches of new, rich, black soil—in Florida, in Louisiana, in Mexico; even in Kansas. This land, added to cheap labor, and labor easily regulated and distributed, made profits so high that a whole system of culture arose in the South, with a new leisure and social philosophy. Black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale; new cities were built on the results of black labor, and a new labor problem, involving all white labor, arose both in Europe and America.

Thus, the old difficulties and paradoxes appeared in new dress. It became easy to say and easier to prove that these black men were not men in the sense that white men were, and could never be, in the same sense, free. Their slavery was a matter of both race and social condition, but the condition was limited and determined by race. They were congenital wards and children, to be well-treated and cared for, but far happier and safer here than in their own land. As the Richmond, Virginia, Examiner put it in 1854:

“Let us not bother our brains about what Providence intends to do with our Negroes in the distant future, but glory in and profit to the utmost by what He has done for them in transplanting them here, and setting them to work on our plantations... True philanthropy to the Negro, begins, like charity, at home; and if Southern men would act as if the canopy of heaven were inscribed with a covenant, in letters of fire, that the Negro is here, and here forever; is our property, and ours forever; ... they would accomplish more good for the race in five years than they boast the institution itself to have accomplished in two centuries...”

On the other hand, the growing exploitation of white labor in Europe, the rise of the factory system, the increased monopoly of land, and the problem of the distribution of political power, began to send wave after wave of immigrants to America, looking for new freedom, new opportunity and new democracy.

The opportunity for real and new democracy in America was broad. Political power at first was, as usual, confined to property holders and an aristocracy of birth and learning. But it was never securely based on land. Land was free and both land and property were possible to nearly every thrifty worker. Schools began early to multiply and open their doors even to the poor laborer. Birth began to count for less and less and America became to the world a land of economic opportunity. So the world came to America, even before the Revolution, and afterwards during the nineteenth century, nineteen million immigrants entered the United States.

When we compare these figures with the cotton crop and the increase of black workers, we see how the economic problem increased in intricacy. This intricacy is shown by the persons in the drama and their differing and opposing interests. There were the native-born Americans, largely of English descent, who were the property holders and employers; and even so far as they were poor, they looked forward to the time when they would accumulate capital and become, as they put it, economically “independent.” Then there were the new immigrants, torn with a certain violence from their older social and economic surroundings; strangers in a new land, with visions of rising in the social and economic world by means of labor. They differed in language and social status,

varying from the half-starved Irish peasant to the educated German and English artisan. There were the free Negroes: those of the North free in some cases for many generations, and voters; and in other cases, fugitives, newcomers from the South, with little skill and small knowledge of life and labor in their new environment. There were the free Negroes of the South, an unstable, harried class, living on sufferance of the law, and the good will of white patrons, and yet rising to be workers and sometimes owners of property and even of slaves, and cultured citizens. There was the great mass of poor whites, disinherited of their economic portion by competition with the slave system, and land monopoly.

In the earlier history of the South, free Negroes had the right to vote. Indeed, so far as the letter of the law was concerned, there was not a single Southern colony in which a black man who owned the requisite amount of property, and complied with other conditions, did not at some period have the legal right to vote.

Negroes voted in Virginia as late as 1723, when the assembly enacted that no free Negro, mulatto or Indian "shall hereafter have any vote at the elections of burgesses or any election whatsoever." In North Carolina, by the Act of 1734, a former discrimination against Negro voters was laid aside and not reenacted until 1835.

A complaint in South Carolina, in 1701, said:

"Several free Negroes were receiv'd, & taken for as good Electors as the best Freeholders in the Province. So that we leave it with Your Lordships to judge whether admitting Aliens, Strangers, Servants, Negroes, &c, as good and qualified Voters, can be thought any ways agreeable to King Charles' Patent to Your Lordships, or the English Constitution of Government." Again in 1716, Jews and Negroes, who had been voting, were expressly excluded. In Georgia, there was at first no color discrimination, although only owners of fifty acres of land could vote. In 1761, voting was expressly confined to white men.¹

In the states carved out of the Southwest, they were disfranchised as soon as the state came into the Union, although in Kentucky they voted between 1792 and 1799, and Tennessee allowed free Negroes to vote in her constitution of 1796.

In North Carolina, where even disfranchisement, in 1835, did not apply to Negroes who already had the right to vote, it was said that the several hundred Negroes who had been voting before then usually voted prudently and judiciously.

In Delaware and Maryland they voted in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In Louisiana, Negroes who had had the right to vote during territorial status were not disfranchised.

To sum up, in colonial times, the free Negro was excluded from the suffrage only in Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia. In the Border States, Delaware disfranchised the Negro in 1792; Maryland in 1783 and 1810. In the Southeast, Florida disfranchised Negroes in 1845; and in the Southwest, Louisiana disfranchised them in 1812; Mississippi in 1817; Alabama in 1819; Missouri, 1821; Arkansas in 1836; Texas, 1845. Georgia in her constitution of 1777 confined voters to white males; but this was omitted in the constitutions of 1789 and 1798.

As slavery grew to a system and the Cotton Kingdom began to expand into imperial white domination, a free Negro was a contradiction, a threat and a menace. As a thief and a vagabond, he threatened society; but as an educated property holder, a successful mechanic or even professional man, he more than threatened slavery. He contradicted and undermined it. He must not be. He must be suppressed, enslaved, colonized. And nothing so bad could be said about him that did not easily appear as true to slaveholders.

In the North, Negroes, for the most part, received political enfranchisement with the white laboring classes. In 1778, the Congress of the Confederation twice refused to insert the word "white"

in the Articles of Confederation in asserting that free inhabitants in each state should be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of free citizens of the several states. In the law of 1783, free Negroes were recognized as a basis of taxation, and in 1784, they were recognized as voters in the territories. In the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, “free male inhabitants of full age” were recognized as voters.

The few Negroes that were in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont could vote if they had the property qualifications. In Connecticut they were disfranchised in 1814; in 1865 this restriction was retained, and Negroes did not regain the right until after the Civil War. In New Jersey, they were disfranchised in 1807, but regained the right in 1820 and lost it again in 1847. Negroes voted in New York in the eighteenth century, then were disfranchised, but in 1821 were permitted to vote with a discriminatory property qualification of \$250. No property qualification was required of whites. Attempts were made at various times to remove this qualification but it was not removed until 1870. In Rhode Island they were disfranchised in the constitution which followed Dorr’s Rebellion, but finally allowed to vote in 1842. In Pennsylvania, they were allowed to vote until 1838 when the “reform” convention restricted the suffrage to whites.

The Western States as territories did not usually restrict the suffrage, but as they were admitted to the Union they disfranchised the Negroes: Ohio in 1803; Indiana in 1816; Illinois in 1818; Michigan in 1837; Iowa in 1846; Wisconsin in 1848; Minnesota in 1858; and Kansas in 1861.

The Northwest Ordinance and even the Louisiana Purchase had made no color discrimination in legal and political rights. But the states admitted from this territory, specifically and from the first, denied free black men the right to vote and passed codes of black laws in Ohio, Indiana and elsewhere, instigated largely by the attitude and fears of the immigrant poor whites from the South. Thus, at first, in Kansas and the West, the problem of the black worker was narrow and specific. Neither the North nor the West asked that black labor in the United States be free and enfranchised. On the contrary, they accepted slave labor as a fact; but they were determined that it should be territorially restricted, and should not compete with free white labor.

What was this industrial system for which the South fought and risked life, reputation and wealth and which a growing element in the North viewed first with hesitating tolerance, then with distaste and finally with economic fear and moral horror? What did it mean to be a slave? It is hard to imagine it today. We think of oppression beyond all conception: cruelty, degradation, whipping and starvation, the absolute negation of human rights; or on the contrary, we may think of the ordinary worker the world over today, slaving ten, twelve, or fourteen hours a day, with not enough to eat, compelled by his physical necessities to do this and not to do that, curtailed in his movements and his possibilities; and we say, here, too, is a slave called a “free worker,” and slavery is merely a matter of name.

But there was in 1863 a real meaning to slavery different from that we may apply to the laborer today. It was in part psychological, the enforced personal feeling of inferiority, the calling of another Master; the standing with hat in hand. It was the helplessness. It was the defenselessness of family life. It was the submergence below the arbitrary will of any sort of individual. It was without doubt worse in these vital respects than that which exists today in Europe or America. Its analogue today is the yellow, brown and black laborer in China and India, in Africa, in the forests of the Amazon; and it was this slavery that fell in America.

The slavery of Negroes in the South was not usually a deliberately cruel and oppressive system. It did not mean systematic starvation or murder. On the other hand, it is just as difficult to conceive as quite true the idyllic picture of a patriarchal state with cultured and humane masters under whom slaves were as children, guided and trained in work and play, given even such mental training

as was for their good, and for the well-being of the surrounding world.

The victims of Southern slavery were often happy; had usually adequate food for their health, and shelter sufficient for a mild climate. The Southerners could say with some justification that when the mass of their field hands were compared with the worst class of laborers in the slums of New York and Philadelphia, and the factory towns of New England, the black slaves were as well off and in some particulars better off. Slaves lived largely in the country where health conditions were better; they worked in the open air, and their hours were about the current hours for peasants throughout Europe. They received no formal education, and neither did the Irish peasant, the English factory-laborer, nor the German Bauer; and in contrast with these free white laborers, the Negroes were protected by a certain primitive sort of old-age pension, job insurance, and sickness insurance; that is, they must be supported in some fashion, when they were too old to work; they must have attention in sickness, for they represented invested capital; and they could never be among the unemployed.

On the other hand, it is just as true that Negro slaves in America represented the worst and lowest conditions among modern laborers. One estimate is that the maintenance of a slave in the South cost the master about \$19 a year, which means that they were among the poorest paid laborers in the modern world. They represented in a very real sense the ultimate degradation of man. Indeed, the system was so reactionary, so utterly inconsistent with modern progress, that we simply cannot grasp it today. No matter how degraded the factory hand, he is not real estate. The tragedy of the black slave's position was precisely this; his absolute subjection to the individual will of an owner and to "the cruelty and injustice which are the invariable consequences of the exercise of irresponsible power, especially where authority must be sometimes delegated by the planter to agents of inferior education and coarser feelings."

The proof of this lies clearly written in the slave codes. Slaves were not considered men. They had no right of petition. They were "devisable like any other chattel." They could own nothing; they could make no contracts; they could hold no property, nor traffic in property; they could not hire out; they could not legally marry nor constitute families; they could not control their children; they could not appeal from their master; they could be punished at will. They could not testify in court; they could be imprisoned by their owners, and the criminal offense of assault and battery could not be committed on the person of a slave. The "willful, malicious and deliberate murder" of a slave was punishable by death, but such a crime was practically impossible of proof. The slave owed to his master and all his family a respect "without bounds, and an absolute obedience." This authority could be transmitted to others. A slave could not sue his master; had no right of redemption; no right to education or religion; a promise made to a slave by his master had no force nor validity. Children followed the condition of the slave mother. The slave could have no access to the judiciary. A slave might be condemned to death for striking any white person.

Looking at these accounts, "it is safe to say that the law regards a Negro slave, so far as his civil status is concerned, purely and absolutely property, to be bought and sold and pass and descend as a tract of land, a horse, or an ox."²

The whole legal status of slavery was enunciated in the extraordinary statement of a Chief Justice of the United States that Negroes had always been regarded in America "as having no rights which a white man was bound to respect."

It may be said with truth that the law was often harsher than the practice. Nevertheless, these laws and decisions represent the legally permissible possibilities, and the only curb upon the power of the master was his sense of humanity and decency, on the one hand, and the conserving of his investment on the other. Of the humanity of large numbers of Southern masters there can be no

doubt. In some cases, they gave their slaves a fatherly care. And yet even in such cases the strain upon their ability to care for large numbers of people and the necessity of entrusting the care of the slaves to other hands than their own, led to much suffering and cruelty.

The matter of his investment in land and slaves greatly curtailed the owner's freedom of action. Under the competition of growing industrial organization, the slave system was indeed the source of immense profits. But for the slave owner and landlord to keep a large or even reasonable share of these profits was increasingly difficult. The price of the slave produce in the open market could be hammered down by merchants and traders acting with knowledge and collusion. And the slave owner was, therefore, continually forced to find his profit not in the high price of cotton and sugar, but in beating even further down the cost of his slave labor. This made the slave owners in early days kill the slave by overwork and renew their working stock; it led to the widely organized interstate slave trade between the Border States and the Cotton Kingdom of the Southern South; it led to neglect and the breaking up of families, and it could not protect the slave against the cruelty, lust and neglect of certain owners.

Thus human slavery in the South pointed and led in two singularly contradictory and paradoxical directions—toward the deliberate commercial breeding and sale of human labor for profit and toward the intermingling of black and white blood. The slaveholders shrank from acknowledging either set of facts but they were clear and undeniable.

In this vital respect, the slave laborer differed from all others of his day: he could be sold; he could, at the will of a single individual, be transferred for life a thousand miles or more. His family, wife and children could be legally and absolutely taken from him. Free laborers today are compelled to wander in search for work and food; their families are deserted for want of wages; but in all this there is no such direct barter in human flesh. It was a sharp accentuation of control over men beyond the modern labor reserve or the contract coolie system.

Negroes could be sold—actually sold as we sell cattle with no reference to calves or bulls, or recognition of family. It was a nasty business. The white South was properly ashamed of it and continually belittled and almost denied it. But it was a stark and bitter fact. Southern papers of the Border States were filled with advertisements:—"I wish to purchase fifty Negroes of both sexes from 6 to 30 years of age for which I will give the highest cash prices."

"Wanted to purchase—Negroes of every description, age and sex."

The consequent disruption of families is proven beyond doubt:

"Fifty Dollars reward.—Ran away from the subscriber, a Negro girl, named Maria. She is of a copper color, between 13 and 14 years of age—bareheaded and barefooted. She is small for her age—very sprightly and very likely. She stated she was going to see her mother at Maysville. Sanford Tomson."

"Committed to jail of Madison County, a Negro woman, who calls her name Fanny, and says she belongs to William Miller, of Mobile. She formerly belonged to John Givins, of this county, who now owns several of her children. David Shropshire, Jailer."

"Fifty Dollar reward.—Ran away from the subscriber, his Negro man Pauladore, commonly called Paul. I understand Gen. R. Y. Hayne has purchased his wife and children from H. L. Pinckney, Esq., and has them on his plantation at Goosecreek, where, no doubt, the fellow is frequently lurking. T. Davis." One can see Pauladore "lurking" about his wife and children.³

The system of slavery demanded a special police force and such a force was made possible and unusually effective by the presence of the poor whites. This explains the difference between the slave revolts in the West Indies, and the lack of effective revolt in the Southern United States. In the West Indies, the power over the slave was held by the whites and carried out by them and such Negroes

as they could trust. In the South, on the other hand, the great planters formed proportionately quite as small a class but they had singularly enough at their command some five million poor whites; that is, there were actually more white people to police the slaves than there were slaves. Considering the economic rivalry of the black and white worker in the North, it would have seemed natural that the poor white would have refused to police the slaves. But two considerations led him in the opposite direction. First of all, it gave him work and some authority as overseer, slave driver, and member of the patrol system. But above and beyond this, it fed his vanity because it associated him with the masters. Slavery bred in the poor white a dislike of Negro toil of all sorts. He never regarded himself as a laborer, or as part of any labor movement. If he had any ambition at all it was to become a planter and to own "niggers." To these Negroes he transferred all the dislike and hatred which he had for the whole slave system. The result was that the system was held stable and intact by the poor white. Even with the late ruin of Haiti before their eyes, the planters, stirred as they were, were nevertheless able to stamp out slave revolt. The dozen revolts of the eighteenth century had dwindled to the plot of Gabriel in 1800, Vesey in 1822, of Nat Turner in 1831 and crews of the *Amistad* and *Creole* in 1839 and 1841. Gradually the whole white South became an armed and commissioned camp to keep Negroes in slavery and to kill the black rebel.

But even the poor white, led by the planter, would not have kept the black slave in nearly so complete control had it not been for what may be called the Safety Valve of Slavery; and that was the chance which a vigorous and determined slave had to run away to freedom.

Under the situation as it developed between 1830 and 1860 there were grave losses to the capital invested in black workers. Encouraged by the idealism of those Northern thinkers who insisted that Negroes were human, the black worker sought freedom by running away from slavery. The physical geography of America with its paths north, by swamp, river and mountain range; the daring of black revolutionists like Henson and Tubman; and the extra-legal efforts of abolitionists made this more and more easy.

One cannot know the real facts concerning the number of fugitives, but despite the fear of advertising the losses, the emphasis put upon fugitive slaves by the South shows that it was an important economic item. It is certain from the bitter effort to increase the efficiency of the fugitive slave law that the losses from runaways were widespread and continuous; and the increase in the interstate slave trade from Border States to the deep South, together with the increase in the price of slaves, showed a growing pressure. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, one bought an average slave for \$200; while in 1860 the price ranged from \$1,400 to \$2,000.

Not only was the fugitive slave important because of the actual loss involved, but for potentialities in the future. These free Negroes were furnishing a leadership for the mass of the black workers, and especially they were furnishing a text for the abolition idealists. Fugitive slaves, like Frederick Douglass and others humbler and less gifted, increased the number of abolitionists by thousands and spelled the doom of slavery.

The true significance of slavery in the United States to the whole social development of America lay in the ultimate relation of slaves to democracy. What were to be the limits of democratic control in the United States? If all labor, black as well as white, became free—were given schools and the right to vote—what control could or should be set to the power and action of these laborers? Was the rule of the mass of Americans to be unlimited, and the right to rule extended to all men regardless of race and color, or if not, what power of dictatorship and control; and how would property and privilege be protected? This was the great and primary question which was in the minds of the men who wrote the Constitution of the United States and continued in the minds of thinkers down through the slavery controversy. It still remains with the world as the problem of

democracy expands and touches all races and nations.

And of all human development, ancient and modern, not the least singular and significant is the philosophy of life and action which slavery bred in the souls of black folk. In most respects its expression was stilted and confused; the rolling periods of Hebrew prophecy and biblical legend furnished inaccurate but splendid words. The subtle folk-lore of Africa, with whimsy and parable, veiled wish and wisdom; and above all fell the anointing chrism of the slave music, the only gift of pure art in America.

Beneath the Veil lay right and wrong, vengeance and love, and sometimes throwing aside the veil, a soul of sweet Beauty and Truth stood revealed. Nothing else of art or religion did the slave South give to the world, except the Negro song and story. And even after slavery, down to our day, it has added but little to this gift. One has but to remember as symbol of it all, still unspoiled by petty artisans, the legend of John Henry, the mighty black, who broke his heart working against the machine, and died "with his Hammer in His Hand."

Up from this slavery gradually climbed the Free Negro with clearer, modern expression and more definite aim long before the emancipation of 1863. His greatest effort lay in his cooperation with the Abolition movement. He knew he was not free until all Negroes were free. Individual Negroes became exhibits of the possibilities of the Negro race, if once it was raised above the status of slavery. Even when, as so often, the Negro became Court Jester to the ignorant American mob, he made his plea in his songs and antics.

Thus spoke "the noblest slave that ever God set free," Frederick Douglass in 1852, in his 4th of July oration at Rochester, voicing the frank and fearless criticism of the black worker:

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages...

"You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crown-headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere tools and bodyguards of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot, and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen, and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against the oppressor; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse!"⁴

Above all, we must remember the black worker was the ultimate exploited; that he formed that

mass of labor which had neither wish nor power to escape from the labor status, in order to directly exploit other laborers, or indirectly, by alliance with capital, to share in their exploitation. To be sure, the black mass, developed again and again, here and there, capitalistic groups in New Orleans, in Charleston and in Philadelphia; groups willing to join white capital in exploiting labor; but they were driven back into the mass by racial prejudice before they had reached a permanent foothold; and thus became all the more bitter against all organization which by means of race prejudice, or the monopoly of wealth, sought to exclude men from making a living.

It was thus the black worker, as founding stone of a new economic system in the nineteenth century and for the modern world, who brought civil war in America. He was its underlying cause, in spite of every effort to base the strife upon union and national power.

That dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States—that great majority of mankind, on whose bent and broken backs rest today the founding stones of modern industry—shares a common destiny; it is despised and rejected by race and color; paid a wage below the level of decent living; driven, beaten, prisoned and enslaved in all but name; spawning the world's raw material and luxury—cotton, wool, coffee, tea, cocoa, palm oil, fibers, spices, rubber, silks, lumber, copper, gold, diamonds, leather—how shall we end the list and where? All these are gathered up at prices lowest of the low, manufactured, transformed and transported at fabulous gain; and the resultant wealth is distributed and displayed and made the basis of world power and universal dominion and armed arrogance in London and Paris, Berlin and Rome, New York and Rio de Janeiro.

Here is the real modern labor problem. Here is the kernel of the problem of Religion and Democracy, of Humanity. Words and futile gestures avail nothing. Out of the exploitation of the dark proletariat comes the Surplus Value filched from human beasts which, in cultured lands, the Machine and harnessed Power veil and conceal. The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown and black.

Dark, shackled knights of labor, clinging still
 Amidst a universal wreck of faith
 To cheerfulness, and foreigners to hate.
 These know ye not, these have ye not received,
 But these shall speak to you Beatitudes.
 Around them surge the tides of all your strife,
 Above them rise the august monuments
 Of all your outward splendor, but they stand
 Unenvious in thought, and bide their time.
 —Leslie P. Hill

¹ Compare A. E. McKinley, *The Suffrage Franchise in the Thirteen English Colonies in America*, p. 137.

² *A Picture of Slavery Drawn from the Decisions of Southern Courts*, p. 5.

³ Compare Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*; Weld, *American Slavery as It Is*.

⁴ Woodson, *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, pp. 218–19.

II. The White Worker

How America became the laborer's Promised Land; and flocking here from all the world the white workers competed with black slaves, with new floods of foreigners, and with growing exploitation, until they fought slavery to save democracy and then lost democracy in a new and vaster slavery

The opportunity for real and new democracy in America was broad. Political power was at first as usual confined to property holders and an aristocracy of birth and learning. But it was never securely based on land. Land was free and both land and property were possible to nearly every thrifty worker. Schools began early to multiply and open their doors even to the poor laborer. Birth began to count for less and less and America became to the world a land of opportunity. So the world came to America, even before the Revolution, and afterward during the nineteenth century, nineteen million immigrants entered the United States.

The new labor that came to the United States, while it was poor, used to oppression and accustomed to a low standard of living, was not willing, after it reached America, to regard itself as a permanent laboring class and it is in the light of this fact that the labor movement among white Americans must be studied. The successful, well paid American laboring class formed, because of its property and ideals, a petty bourgeoisie ready always to join capital in exploiting common labor, white and black, foreign and native. The more energetic and thrifty among the immigrants caught the prevalent American idea that here labor could become emancipated from the necessity of continuous toil and that an increasing proportion could join the class of exploiters, that is of those who made their income chiefly by profit derived through the hiring of labor.

Abraham Lincoln expressed this idea frankly at Hartford, in March, 1860. He said:

"I am not ashamed to confess that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat boat—just what might happen to any poor man's son." Then followed the characteristic philosophy of the time: "I want every man to have his chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition—when he may look forward and hope to be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself afterward, and finally to hire men to work for him. That is the true system."

He was enunciating the widespread American idea of the son rising to a higher economic level than the father; of the chance for the poor man to accumulate wealth and power, which made the European doctrine of a working class fighting for the elevation of all workers seem not only less desirable but even less possible for average workers than they had formerly considered it.

These workers came to oppose slavery not so much from moral as from the economic fear of being reduced by competition to the level of slaves. They wanted a chance to become capitalists; and they found that chance threatened by the competition of a working class whose status at the bottom of the economic structure seemed permanent and inescapable. At first, black slavery jarred upon them, and as early as the seventeenth century German immigrants to Pennsylvania asked the Quakers innocently if slavery was in accord with the Golden Rule. Then, gradually, as succeeding immigrants were thrown in difficult and exasperating competition with black workers, their attitude changed. These were the very years when the white worker was beginning to understand the early American doctrine of wealth and property; to escape the liability of imprisonment for debt, and even to gain the right of universal suffrage. He found pouring into cities like New York and Philadelphia emancipated Negroes with low standards of living, competing for the jobs which the lower class of unskilled white laborers wanted.

For the immediate available jobs, the Irish particularly competed and the employers because of race antipathy and sympathy with the South did not wish to increase the number of Negro workers, so long as the foreigners worked just as cheaply. The foreigners in turn blamed blacks for the cheap

price of labor. The result was race war; riots took place which were at first simply the flaming hostility of groups of laborers fighting for bread and butter; then they turned into race riots. For three days in Cincinnati in 1829, a mob of whites wounded and killed free Negroes and fugitive slaves and destroyed property. Most of the black population, numbering over two thousand, left the city and trekked to Canada. In Philadelphia, 1828–1840, a series of riots took place which thereafter extended until after the Civil War. The riot of 1834 took the dimensions of a pitched battle and lasted for three days. Thirty-one houses and two churches were destroyed. Other riots took place in 1835 and 1838 and a two days' riot in 1842 caused the calling out of the militia with artillery.

In the forties came quite a different class, the English and German workers, who had tried by organization to fight the machine and in the end had to some degree envisaged the Marxian reorganization of industry through trade unions and class struggle. The attitude of these people toward the Negro was varied and contradictory. At first they blurted out their disapprobation of slavery on principle. It was a phase of all wage slavery. Then they began to see a way out for the worker in America through the free land of the West. Here was a solution such as was impossible in Europe: plenty of land, rich land, land coming daily nearer its own markets, to which the worker could retreat and restore the industrial balance ruined in Europe by the expropriation of the worker from the soil. Or in other words, the worker in America saw a chance to increase his wage and regulate his conditions of employment much greater than in Europe. The trade unions could have a material backing that they could not have in Germany, France or England. This thought, curiously enough, instead of increasing the sympathy for the slave turned it directly into rivalry and enmity.

The wisest of the leaders could not clearly envisage just how slave labor in conjunction and competition with free labor tended to reduce all labor toward slavery. For this reason, the union and labor leaders gravitated toward the political party which opposed tariff bounties and welcomed immigrants, quite forgetting that this same Democratic party had as its backbone the planter oligarchy of the South with its slave labor.

The new immigrants in their competition with this group reflected not simply the general attitude of America toward colored people, but particularly they felt a threat of slave competition which these Negroes foreshadowed. The Negroes worked cheaply, partly from custom, partly as their only defense against competition. The white laborers realized that Negroes were part of a group of millions of workers who were slaves by law, and whose competition kept white labor out of the work of the South and threatened its wages and stability in the North. When now the labor question moved West, and became a part of the land question, the competition of black men became of increased importance. Foreign laborers saw more clearly than most Americans the tremendous significance of free land in abundance, such as America possessed, in open contrast to the land monopoly of Europe. But here on this free land, they met not only a few free Negro workers, but the threat of a mass of slaves. The attitude of the West toward Negroes, therefore, became sterner than that of the East. Here was the possibility of direct competition with slaves, and the absorption of Western land into the slave system. This must be resisted at all costs, but beyond this, even free Negroes must be discouraged. On this the Southern poor white immigrants insisted.

In the meantime, the problem of the black worker had not ceased to trouble the conscience and the economic philosophy of America. That the worker should be a bond slave was fundamentally at variance with the American doctrine, and the demand for the abolition of slavery had been continuous since the Revolution. In the North, it had resulted in freeing gradually all of the Negroes. But the comparatively small number of those thus freed was being augmented now by fugitive slaves from the South, and manifestly the ultimate plight of the black worker depended upon the course of Southern slavery. There arose, then, in the thirties, and among thinkers and workers, a demand

that slavery in the United States be immediately abolished.

This demand became epitomized in the crusade of William Lloyd Garrison, himself a poor printer, but a man of education, thought and indomitable courage. This movement was not primarily a labor movement or a matter of profit and wage. It simply said that under any condition of life, the reduction of a human being to real estate was a crime against humanity of such enormity that its existence must be immediately ended. After emancipation there would come questions of labor, wage and political power. But now, first, must be demanded that ordinary human freedom and recognition of essential manhood which slavery blasphemously denied. This philosophy of freedom was a logical continuation of the freedom philosophy of the eighteenth century which insisted that Freedom was not an End but an indispensable means to the beginning of human progress and that democracy could function only after the dropping of feudal privileges, monopoly and chains.

The propaganda which made the abolition movement terribly real was the Fugitive Slave—the piece of intelligent humanity who could say: I have been owned like an ox. I stole my own body and now I am hunted by law and lash to be made an ox again. By no conception of justice could such logic be answered. Nevertheless, at the same time white labor, while it attempted no denial but even expressed faint sympathy, saw in this fugitive slave and in the millions of slaves behind him, willing and eager to work for less than current wage, competition for their own jobs. What they failed to comprehend was that the black man enslaved was an even more formidable and fatal competitor than the black man free.

Here, then, were two labor movements: the movement to give the black worker a minimum legal status which would enable him to sell his own labor, and another movement which proposed to increase the wage and better the condition of the working class in America, now largely composed of foreign immigrants, and dispute with the new American capitalism the basis upon which the new wealth was to be divided. Broad philanthropy and a wide knowledge of the elements of human progress would have led these two movements to unite and in their union to become irresistible. It was difficult, almost impossible, for this to be clear to the white labor leaders of the thirties. They had their particularistic grievances and one of these was the competition of free Negro labor. Beyond this they could easily vision a new and tremendous competition of black workers after all the slaves became free. What they did not see nor understand was that this competition was present and would continue and would be emphasized if the Negro continued as a slave worker. On the other hand, the Abolitionists did not realize the plight of the white laborer, especially the semi-skilled and unskilled worker.

While the Evans brothers, who came as labor agitators in 1825, had among their twelve demands “the abolition of chattel slavery,” nevertheless, George was soon convinced that freedom without land was of no importance. He wrote to Gerrit Smith, who was giving land to Negroes, and said:

“I was formerly, like yourself, sir, a very warm advocate of the abolition of slavery. This was before I saw that there was white slavery. Since I saw this, I have materially changed my views as to the means of abolishing Negro slavery. I now see, clearly, I think, that to give the landless black the privilege of changing masters now possessed by the landless white would hardly be a benefit to him in exchange for his surety of support in sickness and old age, although he is in a favorable climate. If the Southern form of slavery existed at the North, I should say the black would be a great loser by such a change.”¹

At the convention of the New England anti-slavery society in 1845, Robert Owen, the great champion of cooperation, said he was opposed to Negro slavery, but that he had seen worse slavery in England than among the Negroes. Horace Greeley said the same year: “If I am less troubled concerning the slavery prevalent in Charleston or New Orleans, it is because I see so much slavery

in New York which appears to claim my first efforts.”

Thus despite all influences, reform and social uplift veered away from the Negro. Brisbane, Channing, Owen and other leaders called a National Reform Association to meet in New York in May, 1845. In October, Owen’s “World Conference” met. But they hardly mentioned slavery. The Abolitionists did join a National Industrial Congress which met around 1845–1846. Other labor leaders were openly hostile toward the abolitionist movement, while the movement for free land increased.

Thus two movements—Labor-Free Soil, and Abolition, exhibited fundamental divergence instead of becoming one great party of free labor and free land. The Free Soilers stressed the difficulties of even the free laborer getting hold of the land and getting work in the great congestion which immigration had brought; and the abolitionists stressed the moral wrong of slavery. These two movements might easily have cooperated and differed only in matters of emphasis; but the trouble was that black and white laborers were competing for the same jobs just of course as all laborers always are. The immediate competition became open and visible because of racial lines and racial philosophy and particularly in Northern states where free Negroes and fugitive slaves had established themselves as workers, while the ultimate and overshadowing competition of free and slave labor was obscured and pushed into the background. This situation, too, made extraordinary reaction, led by the ignorant mob and fomented by authority and privilege; abolitionists were attacked and their meeting places burned; women suffragists were hooted; laws were proposed making the kidnaping of Negroes easier and disfranchising Negro voters in conventions called for purposes of “reform.”

The humanitarian reform movement reached its height in 1847–1849 amid falling prices, and trade unionism was at a low ebb. The strikes from 1849–1852 won the support of Horace Greeley, and increased the labor organizations. Labor in eastern cities refused to touch the slavery controversy, and the control which the Democrats had over the labor vote in New York and elsewhere increased this tendency to ignore the Negro, and increased the division between white and colored labor. In 1850, a Congress of Trade Unions was held with 110 delegates. They stressed land reform but said nothing about slavery and the organization eventually was captured by Tammany Hall. After 1850 unions composed of skilled laborers began to separate from common laborers and adopt a policy of closed shops and a minimum wage and excluded farmers and Negroes. Although this movement was killed by the panic of 1857, it eventually became triumphant in the eighties and culminated in the American Federation of Labor which today allows any local or national union to exclude Negroes on any pretext.

Other labor leaders became more explicit and emphasized race rather than class. John Campbell said in 1851: “Will the white race ever agree that blacks shall stand beside us on election day, upon the rostrum, in the ranks of the army, in our places of amusement, in places of public worship, ride in the same coaches, railway cars, or steamships? Never! Never! or is it natural, or just, that this kind of equality should exist? God never intended it; had he so willed it, he would have made all one color.”²

New labor leaders arrived in the fifties. Hermann Kriege and Wilhelm Weitling left their work in Germany, and their friends Marx and Engels, and came to America, and at the same time came tens of thousands of revolutionary Germans. The Socialist and Communist papers increased. Trade unions increased in power and numbers and held public meetings. Immediately, the question of slavery injected itself, and that of abolition.

Kriege began to preach land reform and free soil in 1846, and by 1850 six hundred American papers were supporting his program. But Kriege went beyond Evans and former leaders and openly repudiated abolition. He declared in 1846:

“That we see in the slavery question a property question which cannot be settled by itself alone. That we should declare ourselves in favor of the abolitionist movement if it were our intention to throw the Republic into a state of anarchy, to extend the competition of ‘free workingmen’ beyond all measure, and to depress labor itself to the last extremity. That we could not improve the lot of our ‘black brothers’ by abolition under the conditions prevailing in modern society, but make infinitely worse the lot of our ‘white brothers.’ That we believe in the peaceable development of society in the United States and do not, therefore, here at least see our only hope in condition of the extremest degradation. That we feel constrained, therefore, to oppose Abolition with all our might, despite all the importunities of sentimental philistines and despite all the poetical effusions of liberty-intoxicated ladies.”³

Wilhelm Weitling, who came to America the following year, 1847, started much agitation but gave little attention to slavery. He did not openly side with the slaveholder, as Kriege did; nevertheless, there was no condemnation of slavery in his paper. In the first German labor conference in Philadelphia, under Weitling in 1850, a series of resolutions were passed which did not mention slavery. Both Kriege and Weitling joined the Democratic party and numbers of other immigrant Germans did the same thing, and these workers, therefore, became practical defenders of slavery. Doubtless, the “Know-Nothing” movement against the foreign-born forced many workers into the Democratic party, despite slavery.

The year 1853 saw the formation of the Arbeiterbund, under Joseph Weydemeyer, a friend of Karl Marx. This organization advocated Marxian socialism but never got a clear attitude toward slavery. In 1854, it opposed the Kansas-Nebraska bill because “Capitalism and land speculation have again been favored at the expense of the mass of the people,” and “This bill withdraws from or makes unavailable in a future homestead bill vast tracts of territory,” and “authorizes the further extension of slavery; but we have, do now, and shall continue to protest most emphatically against both white and black slavery.”

Nevertheless, when the Arbeiterbund was reorganized in December, 1857, slavery was not mentioned. When its new organ appeared in April, 1858, it said that the question of the present moment was not the abolition of slavery, but the prevention of its further extension and that Negro slavery was firmly rooted in America. One small division of this organization in 1857 called for abolition of the slave trade and colonization of Negroes, but defended the Southern slaveholders.

In 1859, however, a conference of the Arbeiterbund condemned all slavery in whatever form it might appear, and demanded the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. The Democratic and pro-slavery New York Staats-Zeitung counseled the people to abstain from agitation against the extension of slavery, but all of the German population did not agree.

As the Chartist movement increased in England, the press was filled with attacks against the United States and its institutions, and the Chartists were clear on the matter of slavery. Their chief organ in 1844 said: “That damning stain upon the American escutcheon is one that has caused the Republicans of Europe to weep for very shame and mortification; and the people of the United States have much to answer for at the bar of humanity for this indecent, cruel, revolting and fiendish violation of their boasted principle—that ‘All men are born free and equal.’ ”

The labor movement in England continued to emphasize the importance of attacking slavery; and the agitation, started by the work of Frederick Douglass and others, increased in importance and activity. In 1857, George I. Holyoake sent an anti-slavery address to America, signed by 1,800 English workingmen, whom Karl Marx himself was guiding in England, and this made the black American worker a central text. They pointed out the fact that the black worker was furnishing the raw material which the English capitalist was exploiting together with the English worker. This

same year, the United States Supreme Court sent down the Dred Scott decision that Negroes were not citizens.

This English initiative had at first but limited influence in America. The trade unions were willing to admit that the Negroes ought to be free sometime; but at the present, self-preservation called for their slavery; and after all, whites were a different grade of workers from blacks. Even when the Marxian ideas arrived, there was a split; the earlier representatives of the Marxian philosophy in America agreed with the older Union movement in deprecating any entanglement with the abolition controversy. After all, abolition represented capital. The whole movement was based on mawkish sentimentality, and not on the demands of the workers, at least of the white workers. And so the early American Marxists simply gave up the idea of intruding the black worker into the socialist commonwealth at that time.

To this logic the abolitionists were increasingly opposed. It seemed to them that the crucial point was the matter of freedom; that a free laborer in America had an even chance to make his fortune as a worker or a farmer; but, on the other hand, if the laborer was not free, as in the case of the Negro, he had no opportunity, and he inevitably degraded white labor. The abolitionist did not sense the new subordination into which the worker was being forced by organized capital, while the laborers did not realize that the exclusion of four million workers from the labor program was a fatal omission. Wendell Phillips alone suggested a boycott on Southern goods, and said that the great cause of labor was paramount and included mill operatives in New England, peasants in Ireland, and laborers in South America who ought not to be lost sight of in sympathy for the Southern slave.

In the United States shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War there were twenty-six trades with national organizations, including the iron and steel workers, machinists, blacksmiths, etc. The employers formed a national league and planned to import more workmen from foreign countries. The iron molders started a national strike July 5, 1859, and said: "Wealth is power, and practical experience teaches us that it is a power but too often used to oppress and degrade the daily laborer. Year after year the capital of the country becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of a few, and, in proportion as the wealth of the country becomes centralized, its power increases, and the laboring classes are impoverished. It therefore becomes us, as men who have to battle with the stern realities of life, to look this matter fair in the face; there is no dodging the question; let every man give it a fair, full and candid consideration, and then act according to his honest convictions. What position are we, the mechanics of America, to hold in Society?"

There was not a word in this address about slavery and one would not dream that the United States was on the verge of the greatest labor revolution it had seen. Other conferences of the molders, machinists and blacksmiths and others were held in the sixties, and a labor mass meeting at Faneuil Hall in Boston in 1861 said: "The truth is that the workingmen care little for the strife of political parties and the intrigues of office-seekers. We regard them with the contempt they deserve. We are weary of this question of slavery; it is a matter which does not concern us; and we wish only to attend to our business, and leave the South to attend to their own affairs, without any interference from the North."⁴

In all this consideration, we have so far ignored the white workers of the South and we have done this because the labor movement ignored them and the abolitionists ignored them; and above all, they were ignored by Northern capitalists and Southern planters. They were in many respects almost a forgotten mass of men. Cairnes describes the slave South, the period just before the war:

"It resolves itself into three classes, broadly distinguished from each other, and connected by no common interest—the slaves on whom devolves all the regular industry, the slaveholders who reap

all its fruits, and an idle and lawless rabble who live dispersed over vast plains in a condition little removed from absolute barbarism.”

From all that has been written and said about the ante-bellum South, one almost loses sight of about 5,000,000 white people in 1860 who lived in the South and held no slaves. Even among the two million slaveholders, an oligarchy of 8,000 really ruled the South, while as an observer said: “For twenty years, I do not recollect ever to have seen or heard these non-slaveholding whites referred to by the Southern gentleman as constituting any part of what they called the South.”⁵ They were largely ignorant and degraded; only 25% could read and write.

The condition of the poor whites has been many times described:

“A wretched log hut or two are the only habitations in sight. Here reside, or rather take shelter, the miserable cultivators of the ground, or a still more destitute class who make a precarious living by peddling ‘lightwood’ in the city...

These cabins ... are dens of filth. The bed if there be a bed is a layer of something in the corner that defies scenting. If the bed is nasty, what of the floor? What of the whole enclosed space? What of the creatures themselves? Pough! Water in use as a purifier is unknown. Their faces are bedaubed with the muddy accumulation of weeks. They just give them a wipe when they see a stranger to take off the blackest dirt... The poor wretches seem startled when you address them, and answer your questions cowering like culprits.”⁶

Olmsted said: “I saw as much close packing, filth and squalor, in certain blocks inhabited by laboring whites in Charleston, as I have witnessed in any Northern town of its size; and greater evidences of brutality and ruffianly character, than I have ever happened to see, among an equal population of this class, before.”⁷

Two classes of poor whites have been differentiated: the mountain whites and the poor whites of the lowlands. “Below a dirty and illflavored house, down under the bank on the shingle near the river, sits a family of five people, all ill-clothed and unclean; a bleary-eyed old woman, a younger woman with a mass of tangled red hair hanging about her shoulders, indubitably suckling a baby; a little girl with the same auburn evidence of Scotch ancestry; a boy, and a younger child all gathered about a fire made among some bricks, surrounding a couple of iron saucepans, in which is a dirty mixture looking like mud, but probably warmed-up sorghum syrup, which with a few pieces of corn pone, makes their breakfast.

“Most of them are illiterate and more than correspondingly ignorant. Some of them had Indian ancestors and a few bear evidences of Negro blood. The so-called ‘mountain boomer,’ says an observer, ‘has little self-respect and no self-reliance. ... So long as his corn pile lasts the ‘cracker’ lives in contentment, feasting on a sort of hoe cake made of grated corn meal mixed with salt and water and baked before the hot coals, with addition of what game the forest furnishes him when he can get up the energy to go out and shoot or trap it... The irregularities of their moral lives cause them no sense of shame... But, notwithstanding these low moral conceptions, they are of an intense religious excitability.’ ”⁸

Above this lowest mass rose a middle class of poor whites in the making. There were some small farmers who had more than a mere sustenance and yet were not large planters. There were overseers. There was a growing class of merchants who traded with the slaves and free Negroes and became in many cases larger traders, dealing with the planters for the staple crops. Some poor whites rose to the professional class, so that the rift between the planters and the mass of the whites was partially bridged by this smaller intermediate class.

While revolt against the domination of the planters over the poor whites was voiced by men like Helper, who called for a class struggle to destroy the planters, this was nullified by deep-rooted

antagonism to the Negro, whether slave or free. If black labor could be expelled from the United States or eventually exterminated, then the fight against the planter could take place. But the poor whites and their leaders could not for a moment contemplate a fight of united white and black labor against the exploiters. Indeed, the natural leaders of the poor whites, the small farmer, the merchant, the professional man, the white mechanic and slave overseer, were bound to the planters and repelled from the slaves and even from the mass of the white laborers in two ways: first, they constituted the police patrol who could ride with planters and now and then exercise unlimited force upon recalcitrant or runaway slaves; and then, too, there was always a chance that they themselves might also become planters by saving money, by investment, by the power of good luck; and the only heaven that attracted them was the life of the great Southern planter. There were a few weak associations of white mechanics, such as printers and shipwrights and iron molders, in 1850–1860, but practically no labor movement in the South.

Charles Nordhoff states that he was told by a wealthy Alabaman, in 1860, that the planters in his region were determined to discontinue altogether the employment of free mechanics. “On my own place,” he said, “I have slave carpenters, slave blacksmiths, and slave wheelwrights, and thus I am independent of free mechanics.” And a certain Alfred E. Mathews remarks: “I have seen free white mechanics obliged to stand aside while their families were suffering for the necessities of life, when the slave mechanics, owned by rich and influential men, could get plenty of work; and I have heard these same white mechanics breathe the most bitter curses against the institution of slavery and the slave aristocracy.”

The resultant revolt of the poor whites, just as the revolt of the slaves, came through migration. And their migration, instead of being restricted, was freely encouraged. As a result, the poor whites left the South in large numbers. In 1860, 399,700 Virginians were living out of their native state. From Tennessee, 344,765 emigrated; from North Carolina, 272,606, and from South Carolina, 256,868. The majority of these had come to the Middle West and it is quite possible that the Southern states sent as many settlers to the West as the Northeastern states, and while the Northeast demanded free soil, the Southerners demanded not only free soil but the exclusion of Negroes from work and the franchise. They had a very vivid fear of the Negro as a competitor in labor, whether slave or free.

It was thus the presence of the poor white Southerner in the West that complicated the whole Free Soil movement in its relation to the labor movement. While the Western pioneer was an advocate of extreme democracy and equalitarianism in his political and economic philosophy, his vote and influence did not go to strengthen the abolition-democracy, before, during, or even after the war. On the contrary, it was stopped and inhibited by the doctrine of race, and the West, therefore, long stood against that democracy in industry which might have emancipated labor in the United States, because it did not admit to that democracy the American citizen of Negro descent.

Thus Northern workers were organizing and fighting industrial integration in order to gain higher wage and shorter hours, and more and more they saw economic salvation in the rich land of the West. A Western movement of white workers and pioneers began and was paralleled by a Western movement of planters and black workers in the South. Land and more land became the cry of the Southern political leader, with finally a growing demand for reopening of the African slave trade. Land, more land, became the cry of the peasant farmer in the North. The two forces met in Kansas, and in Kansas civil war began.

The South was fighting for the protection and expansion of its agrarian feudalism. For the sheer existence of slavery, there must be a continual supply of fertile land, cheaper slaves, and such political power as would give the slave status full legal recognition and protection, and annihilate

the free Negro. The Louisiana Purchase had furnished slaves and land, but most of the land was in the Northwest. The foray into Mexico had opened an empire, but the availability of this land was partly spoiled by the loss of California to free labor. This suggested a proposed expansion of slavery toward Kansas, where it involved the South in competition with white labor: a competition which endangered the slave status, encouraged slave revolt, and increased the possibility of fugitive slaves.

It was a war to determine how far industry in the United States should be carried on under a system where the capitalist owns not only the nation's raw material, not only the land, but also the laborer himself; or whether the laborer was going to maintain his personal freedom, and enforce it by growing political and economic independence based on widespread ownership of land.

This brings us down to the period of the Civil War. Up to the time that the war actually broke out, American labor simply refused, in the main, to envisage black labor as a part of its problem. Right up to the edge of the war, it was talking about the emancipation of white labor and the organization of stronger unions without saying a word, or apparently giving a thought, to four million black slaves. During the war, labor was resentful. Workers were forced to fight in a strife between capitalists in which they had no interest and they showed their resentment in the peculiarly human way of beating and murdering the innocent victims of it all, the black free Negroes of New York and other Northern cities; while in the South, five million non-slaveholding poor white farmers and laborers sent their manhood by the thousands to fight and die for a system that had degraded them equally with the black slave. Could one imagine anything more paradoxical than this whole situation?

America thus stepped forward in the first blossoming of the modern age and added to the Art of Beauty, gift of the Renaissance, and to Freedom of Belief, gift of Martin Luther and Leo X, a vision of democratic self-government: the domination of political life by the intelligent decision of free and self-sustaining men. What an idea and what an area for its realization—endless land of richest fertility, natural resources such as Earth seldom exhibited before, a population infinite in variety, of universal gift, burned in the fires of poverty and caste, yearning toward the Unknown God; and self-reliant pioneers, unafraid of man or devil. It was the Supreme Adventure, in the last Great Battle of the West, for that human freedom which would release the human spirit from lower lust for mere meat, and set it free to dream and sing.

And then some unjust God leaned, laughing, over the ramparts of heaven and dropped a black man in the midst.

It transformed the world. It turned democracy back to Roman Imperialism and Fascism; it restored caste and oligarchy; it replaced freedom with slavery and withdrew the name of humanity from the vast majority of human beings.

But not without struggle. Not without writhing and rending of spirit and pitiable wail of lost souls. They said: Slavery was wrong but not all wrong; slavery must perish and not simply move; God made black men; God made slavery; the will of God be done; slavery to the glory of God and black men as his servants and ours; slavery as a way to freedom—the freedom of blacks, the freedom of whites; white freedom as the goal of the world and black slavery as the path thereto. Up with the white world, down with the black!

Then came this battle called Civil War, beginning in Kansas in 1854, and ending in the presidential election of 1876—twenty awful years. The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery. The whole weight of America was thrown to color caste. The colored world went down before England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and America. A new slavery arose. The upward moving of white labor was betrayed into wars for profit based on color

caste. Democracy died save in the hearts of black folk.

Indeed, the plight of the white working class throughout the world today is directly traceable to Negro slavery in America, on which modern commerce and industry was founded, and which persisted to threaten free labor until it was partially overthrown in 1863. The resulting color caste founded and retained by capitalism was adopted, forwarded and approved by white labor, and resulted in subordination of colored labor to white profits the world over. Thus the majority of the world's laborers, by the insistence of white labor, became the basis of a system of industry which ruined democracy and showed its perfect fruit in World War and Depression. And this book seeks to tell that story.

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?
The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.
—Percy Bysshe Shelley

¹ Schliiter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery*, p. 66.

² Campbell, *Negromania*, p. 545.

³ Schliiter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery*, pp. 72, 73.

⁴ Schliiter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery*, p. 135.

⁵ Schliiter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery*, p. 86.

⁶ Simkins and Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 326.

⁷ Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, p. 404.

⁸ Hart, *The Southern South*, pp. 34, 35.

III. The Planter

How seven per cent of a section within a nation ruled five million white people and owned four million black people and sought to make agriculture equal to industry through the rule of property without yielding political power or education to labor

Seven per cent of the total population of the South in 1860 owned nearly 3 million of the 3,953,696 slaves. There was nearly as great a concentration of ownership in the best agricultural land. This meant that in a country predominantly agricultural, the ownership of labor, land and capital was extraordinarily concentrated. Such peculiar organization of industry would have to be carefully reconciled with the new industrial and political democracy of the nineteenth century if it were to survive.

Of the five million whites who owned no slaves some were united in interest with the slave owners. These were overseers, drivers and dealers in slaves. Others were hirers of white and black labor, and still others were merchants and professional men, forming a petty bourgeois class, and climbing up to the planter class or falling down from it. The mass of the poor whites, as we have shown, were economic outcasts.

Colonial Virginia declared its belief in natural and inalienable rights, popular sovereignty, and government for the common good, even before the Declaration of Independence. But it soon became the belief of doctrinaires, and not a single other Southern state enacted these doctrines of equality until after the Civil War. The Reconstruction constitutions incorporated them; but quite logically, South Carolina repudiated its declaration in 1895.

The domination of property was shown in the qualifications for office and voting in the South. Southerners and others in the Constitutional Convention asked for property qualifications for the President of the United States, the federal judges, and Senators. Most Southern state governments required a property qualification for the Governor, and in South Carolina, he must be worth ten thousand pounds. Members of the legislature must usually be landholders.

Plural voting was allowed as late as 1832. The requirement of the ownership of freehold land for officeholders operated to the disadvantage of merchants and mechanics. In North Carolina, a man must own 50 acres to vote for Senator, and in 1828, out of 250 voters at Wilmington, only 48 had the qualifications to vote for Senator. Toward the time of the Civil War many of these property qualifications disappeared.

Into the hands of the slaveholders the political power of the South was concentrated, by their social prestige, by property ownership and also by their extraordinary rule of the counting of all or at least three-fifths of the Negroes as part of the basis of representation in the legislature. It is singular how this "three-fifths" compromise was used, not only to degrade Negroes in theory, but in practice to disfranchise the white South. Nearly all of the Southern states began with recognizing the white population as a basis of representation; they afterward favored the black belt by direct legislation or by counting three-fifths of the slave population, and then finally by counting the whole black population; or they established, as in Virginia and South Carolina, a "mixed" basis of representation, based on white population and on property; that is, on land and slaves.

In the distribution of seats in the legislature, this manipulation of political power appears. In the older states representatives were assigned arbitrarily to counties, districts and towns, with little regard to population. This was for the purpose of putting the control in the hands of wealthy planters. Variations from this were the basing of representation on the white population in one House, and taxation in the other, or the use of the Federal proportion; that is, free persons and three-fifths of the slaves, or Federal proportion and taxation combined. These were all manipulated so as to favor the wealthy planters. The commercial class secured scant representation as compared with agriculture,

"It is a fact that the political working of the state [of South Carolina] is in the hands of one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty men. It has taken me six months to appreciate the entireness of the fact, though of course I had heard it stated."*

In all cases, the slaveholder practically voted both for himself and his slaves and it was not until 1850 and particularly after the war that there were signs of self-assertion on the part of the poor whites to break this monopoly of power. Alabama, for instance, in 1850, based representation in the general assembly upon the white inhabitants, after thirty years of counting the whole white and black population. Thus the Southern planters had in their hands from 1820 to the Civil War political power equivalent to one or two million freemen in the North.

They fought bitterly during the early stages of Reconstruction to retain this power for the whites, while at the same time granting no political power to the blacks. Finally and up to this day, by making good their efforts to disfranchise the blacks, the political heirs of the planters still retain for themselves this added political representation as a legacy from slavery, and a power to frustrate all third party movements.

Thus, the planters who owned from fifty to one thousand slaves and from one thousand to ten thousand acres of land came to fill the whole picture in the South, and literature and the propaganda which is usually called history have since exaggerated that picture. The planter certainly dominated politics and social life—he boasted of his education, but on the whole, these Southern leaders were men singularly ignorant of modern conditions and trends and of their historical background. All their ideas of gentility and education went back to the days of European privilege and caste. They cultivated a surface acquaintance with literature and they threw Latin quotations even into Congress. Some few had a cultural education at Princeton and at Yale, and to this day Princeton refuses to receive Negro students, and Yale has admitted a few with reluctance, as a curious legacy from slavery.

Many Southerners traveled abroad and the fashionable European world met almost exclusively Americans from the South and were favorably impressed by their manners which contrasted with the *gaucherie* of the average Northerner. A Southerner of the upper class could enter a drawing room and carry on a light conversation and eat according to the rules, on tables covered with silver and fine linen. They were “gentlemen” according to the older and more meager connotation of the word.

Southern women of the planter class had little formal education; they were trained in dependence, with a smattering of French and music; they affected the latest European styles; were always described as “beautiful” and of course must do no work for a living except in the organization of their households. In this latter work, they were assisted and even impeded by more servants than they needed. The temptations of this sheltered exotic position called the finer possibilities of womanhood into exercise only in exceptional cases. It was the woman on the edge of the inner circles and those of the struggling poor whites who sought to enter the ranks of the privileged who showed superior character.

Most of the planters, like most Americans, were of humble descent, two or three generations removed. Jefferson Davis was a grandson of a poor Welsh immigrant. Yet the Southerner’s assumptions impressed the North and although most of them were descended from the same social classes as the Yankees, yet the Yankees had more recently been reenforced by immigration and were strenuous, hard-working men, ruthlessly pushing themselves into the leadership of the new industry. Such folk not only “love a lord,” but even the fair imitation of one.

The leaders of the South had leisure for good breeding and high living, and before them Northern society abased itself and flattered and fawned over them. Perhaps this, more than ethical reasons, or even economic advantage, made the way of the abolitionist hard. In New York, Saratoga, Philadelphia and Cincinnati, a slave baron, with his fine raiment, gorgeous and doll-like women and black flunkies, quite turned the heads of Northern society. Their habits of extravagance impressed the nation for a long period. Much of the waste charged against Reconstruction arose from the attempt of the post-war population, white and black, to imitate the manners of a slave-nurtured gentility, and this brought furious protest from former planters; because while planters spent money filched from the labor of black slaves, the poor white and black leaders of Reconstruction spent taxes drawn from recently impoverished planters.

From an economic point of view, this planter class had interest in consumption rather than production. They exploited labor in order that they themselves should live more grandly and not mainly for increasing production. Their taste went to elaborate households, well furnished and hospitable; they had much to eat and drink; they consumed large quantities of liquor; they gambled and caroused and kept up the habit of dueling well down into the nineteenth century. Sexually they were lawless, protecting elaborately and flattering the virginity of a small class of women of their

social clan, and keeping at command millions of poor women of the two laboring groups of the South.

Sexual chaos was always the possibility of slavery, not always realized but always possible: polygamy through the concubinage of black women to white men; polyandry between black women and selected men on plantations in order to improve the human stock of strong and able workers. The census of 1860 counted 588,352 persons obviously of mixed blood—a figure admittedly below the truth.

“Every man who resides on his plantation may have his harem, and has every inducement of custom, and of pecuniary gain [The law declares that the children of slaves are to follow the fortunes of the mother. Hence the practice of planters selling and bequeathing their own children.], to tempt him to the common practice. Those who, notwithstanding, keep their homes undefiled may be considered as of incorruptible purity.”¹

Mrs. Trollope speaks of the situation of New Orleans’ mulattoes:

“Of all the prejudices I have ever witnessed, this appears to us the most violent, and the most inveterate. Quadroon girls, the acknowledged daughters of wealthy American or Creole fathers, educated with all the style and accomplishments which money can procure at New Orleans, and with all the decorum that care and affection can give—exquisitely beautiful, graceful, gentle, and amiable, are not admitted, nay, are not on any terms admissible, into the society of the Creole families of Louisiana. They cannot marry; that is to say, no ceremony can render any union with them legal or binding.”²

“It is known by almost everybody who has heard of the man, Richard M. Johnson, a Democratic Vice-President of the United States, that he had colored daughters of whom he was proud; and his was not an exceptional case.”³ Several Presidents of the United States have been accused of racial catholicity in sex.

And finally, one cannot forget that bitter word attributed to a sister of a President of the United States: “We Southern ladies are complimented with names of wives; but we are only mistresses of seraglios.”⁴

What the planters wanted was income large enough to maintain the level of living which was their ideal. Naturally, only a few of them had enough for this, and the rest, striving toward it, were perpetually in debt and querulously seeking a reason for this indebtedness outside themselves. Since it was beneath the dignity of a “gentleman” to encumber himself with the details of his finances, this lordly excuse enabled the planter to place between himself and the black slave a series of intermediaries through whom bitter pressure and exploitation could be exercised and large crops raised. For the very reason that the planters did not give attention to details, there was wide tendency to commercialize their growing business of supplying raw materials for an expanding modern industry. They were the last to comprehend the revolution through which that industry was passing and their efforts to increase income succeeded only at the cost of raping the land and degrading the laborers.

Theoretically there were many ways of increasing the income of the planter; practically there was but one. The planter might sell his crops at higher prices; he might increase his crop by intensive farming, or he might reduce the cost of handling and transporting his crops; he might increase his crops by making his laborers work harder and giving them smaller wages. In practice, the planter, so far as prices were concerned, was at the mercy of the market. Merchants and manufacturers by intelligence and close combination set the current prices of raw material. Their power thus exercised over agriculture was not unlimited but it was so large, so continuous and so steadily and intelligently exerted that it gradually reduced agriculture to a subsidiary industry whose returns

scarcely supported the farmer and his labor.

The Southern planter in the fifties was in a key position to attempt to break and arrest the growth of this domination of all industry by trade and manufacture. But he was too lazy and self-indulgent to do this and he would not apply his intelligence to the problem. His capitalistic rivals of the North were hard-working, simple-living zealots devoting their whole energy and intelligence to building up an industrial system. They quickly monopolized transport and mines and factories and they were more than willing to include the big plantations. But the planter wanted results without effort. He wanted large income without corresponding investment and he insisted furiously upon a system of production which excluded intelligent labor, machinery, and modern methods. He toyed with the idea of local manufactures and ships and railroads. But this entailed too much work and sacrifice.

The result was that Northern and European industry set prices for Southern cotton, tobacco and sugar which left a narrow margin of profit for the planter. He could retaliate only by more ruthlessly exploiting his slave labor so as to get the largest crops at the least expense. He was therefore not deliberately cruel to his slaves, but he had to raise cotton enough to satisfy his pretensions and self-indulgence, even if it brutalized and commercialized his slave labor.

Thus slavery was the economic lag of the 16th century carried over into the 19th century and bringing by contrast and by friction moral lapses and political difficulties. It has been estimated that the Southern states had in 1860 three billion dollars invested in slaves, which meant that slaves and land represented the mass of their capital. Being generally convinced that Negroes could only labor as slaves, it was easy for them to become further persuaded that slaves were better off than white workers and that the South had a better labor system than the North, with extraordinary possibilities in industrial and social development.

The argument went like this: raw material like cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, together with other foodstuffs formed the real wealth of the United States, and were produced by the Southern states. These crops were sold all over the world and were in such demand that the industry of Europe depended upon them. The trade with Europe must be kept open so that the South might buy at the lowest prices such manufactured goods as she wanted, and she must oppose all Northern attempts to exalt industry at the expense of agriculture.

The North might argue cogently that industry and manufacture could build up in the United States a national economy. Writers on economics began in Germany and America to elaborate and insist upon the advantages of such a system; but the South would have none of it. It meant not only giving the North a new industrial prosperity, but doing this at the expense of England and France; and the Southern planters preferred Europe to Northern America. They not only preferred Europe for social reasons and for economic advantages, but they sensed that the new power of monopolizing and distributing capital through a national banking system, if permitted in the North in an expanding industry, would make the North an even greater financial dictator of the South than it was at the time.

The South voiced for the Southern farmer, in 1850, words almost identical with those of the Western farmer, seventy-five years later. "All industry," declared one Southerner, "is getting legislative support against agriculture, and thus the profits are going to manufacture and trade, and these concentrated in the North stand against the interests of the South."

It could not, perhaps, be proven that the Southern planter, had he been educated in economics and history, and had he known the essential trends of the modern world, could have kept the Industrial Revolution from subordinating agriculture and reducing it to its present vassalage to manufacturing. But it is certain that an enlightened and far-seeing agrarianism under the peculiar

economic circumstances of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century could have essentially modified the economic trend of the world.

The South with free rich land and cheap labor had the monopoly of cotton, a material in universal demand. If the leaders of the South, while keeping the consumer in mind, had turned more thoughtfully to the problem of the American producer, and had guided the production of cotton and food so as to take every advantage of new machinery and modern methods in agriculture, they might have moved forward with manufacture and been able to secure an approximately large amount of profit. But this would have involved yielding to the demands of modern labor: opportunity for education, legal protection of women and children, regulation of the hours of work, steadily increasing wages and the right to some voice in the administration of the state if not in the conduct of industry.

The South had but one argument against following modern civilization in this yielding to the demand of laboring humanity: it insisted on the efficiency of Negro labor for ordinary toil and on its essential equality in physical condition with the average labor of Europe and America. But in order to maintain its income without sacrifice or exertion, the South fell back on a doctrine of racial differences which it asserted made higher intelligence and increased efficiency impossible for Negro labor. Wishing such an excuse for lazy indulgence, the planter easily found, invented and proved it. His subservient religious leaders reverted to the "Curse of Canaan"; his pseudo-scientists gathered and supplemented all available doctrines of race inferiority; his scattered schools and pedantic periodicals repeated these legends, until for the average planter born after 1840 it was impossible not to believe that all valid laws in psychology, economics and politics stopped with the Negro race.

The espousal of the doctrine of Negro inferiority by the South was primarily because of economic motives and the inter-connected political urge necessary to support slave industry; but to the watching world it sounded like the carefully thought out result of experience and reason; and because of this it was singularly disastrous for modern civilization in science and religion, in art and government, as well as in industry. The South could say that the Negro, even when brought into modern civilization, could not be civilized, and that, therefore, he and the other colored peoples of the world were so far inferior to the whites that the white world had a right to rule mankind for their own selfish interests.

Never in modern times has a large section of a nation so used its combined energies to the degradation of mankind. The hurt to the Negro in this era was not only his treatment in slavery; it was the wound dealt to his reputation as a human being. Nothing was left; nothing was sacred; and while the best and more cultivated and more humane of the planters did not themselves always repeat the calumny, they stood by, consenting by silence, while blatherskites said things about Negroes too cruelly untrue to be the word of civilized men. Not only then in the forties and fifties did the word Negro lose its capital letter, but African history became the tale of degraded animals and sub-human savages, where no vestige of human culture found foothold.

Thus a basis in reason, philanthropy and science was built up for Negro slavery. Judges on the bench declared that Negro servitude was to last, "if the apocalypse be not in error, until the end of time." The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer of January 9, 1860, said, "We can't see for the life of us how anyone understanding fully the great principle that underlies our system of involuntary servitude, can discover any monstrosity in subjecting a Negro to slavery of a white man. We contend on the contrary that the monstrosity, or, at least, the unnaturalness in this matter, consists in finding Negroes anywhere in white communities not under the control of the whites. Whenever we see a Negro, we presuppose a master, and if we see him in what is commonly called a 'free state,' we consider him out of his place. This matter of manumission, or emancipation 'now, thank heaven, less

practiced than formerly,' is a species of false philanthropy, which we look upon as a cousin-German to Abolitionism—bad for the master, worse for the slave."

Beneath this educational and social propaganda lay the undoubted evidence of the planter's own expenses. He saw ignorant and sullen labor deliberately reducing his profits. In fact, he always faced the negative attitude of the general strike. Open revolt of slaves—refusal to work—could be met by beating and selling to the harsher methods of the deep South and Southwest as punishment. Running away could be curbed by law and police. But nothing could stop the dogged slave from doing just as little and as poor work as possible. All observers spoke of the fact that the slaves were slow and churlish; that they wasted material and malingered at their work. Of course, they did. This was not racial but economic. It was the answer of any group of laborers forced down to the last ditch. They might be made to work continuously but no power could make them work well.

If the European or Northern laborer did not do his work properly and fast enough, he would lose the job. The black slave could not lose his job. If the Northern laborer got sick or injured, he was discharged, usually without compensation; the black slave could not be discharged and had to be given some care in sicknesses, particularly if he represented a valuable investment. The Northern and English employer could select workers in the prime of life and did not have to pay children too young to work or adults too old. The slave owner had to take care of children and old folk, and while this did not cost much on a farm or entail any great care, it did seriously cut down the proportion of his effective laborers, which could only be balanced by the systematic labor of women and children. The children ran loose with only the most general control, getting their food with the other slaves. The old folk foraged for themselves. Now and then they were found dead of neglect, but usually there was no trouble in their getting at least food enough to live and some rude shelter.

The economic difficulties that thus faced the planter in exploiting the black slave were curious. Contrary to the trend of his age, he could not use higher wage to induce better work or a larger supply of labor. He could not allow his labor to become intelligent, although intelligent labor would greatly increase the production of wealth. He could not depend on voluntary immigration unless the immigrants be slaves, and he must bear the burden of the old and sick and could only balance this by child labor and the labor of women.

The use of slave women as day workers naturally broke up or made impossible the normal Negro home and this and the slave code led to a development of which the South was really ashamed and which it often denied, and yet perfectly evident: the raising of slaves in the Border slave states for systematic sale on the commercialized cotton plantations.

The ability of the slaveholder and landlord to sequester a large share of the profits of slave labor depended upon his exploitation of that labor, rather than upon high prices for his product in the market. In the world market, the merchants and manufacturers had all the advantage of unity, knowledge and purpose, and could hammer down the price of raw material. The slaveholder, therefore, saw Northern merchants and manufacturers enrich themselves from the results of Southern agriculture. He was angry and used all of his great political power to circumvent it. His only effective economic movement, however, could take place against the slave. He was forced, unless willing to take lower profits, continually to beat down the cost of his slave labor.

But there was another motive which more and more strongly as time went on compelled the planter to cling to slavery. His political power was based on slavery. With four million slaves he could balance the votes of 2,400,000 Northern voters, while in the inconceivable event of their becoming free, their votes would outnumber those of his Northern opponents, which was precisely what happened in 1868.

As the economic power of the planter waned, his political power became more and more indis-

pensable to the maintenance of his income and profits. Holding his industrial system secure by this political domination, the planter turned to the more systematic exploitation of his black labor. One method called for more land and the other for more slaves. Both meant not only increased crops but increased political power. It was a temptation that swept greed, religion, military pride and dreams of empire to its defense. There were two possibilities. He might follow the old method of the early West Indian sugar plantations: work his slaves without regard to their physical condition, until they died of over-work or exposure, and then buy new ones. The difficulty of this, however, was that the price of slaves, since the attempt to abolish the slave trade, was gradually rising. This in the deep South led to a strong and gradually increasing demand for the reopening of the African slave trade, just as modern industry demands cheaper and cheaper coolie labor in Asia and half-slave labor in African mines.

The other possibility was to find continual increments of new, rich land upon which ordinary slave labor would bring adequate return. This land the South sought in the Southeast; then beyond the Mississippi in Louisiana and Texas, then in Mexico, and finally, it turned its face in two directions: toward the Northwestern territories of the United States and toward the West Indian islands and South America. The South was drawn toward the West by two motives: first the possibility that slavery in Kansas, Colorado, Utah and Nevada would be at least as profitable as in Missouri, and secondly to prevent the expansion of free labor there and its threat to slavery. This challenge was a counsel of despair in the face of modern industrial development and probably the radical South expected defeat in the West and hoped the consequent resentment among the slaveholders would set the South toward a great slave empire in the Caribbean. Jefferson Davis was ready to reopen the African slave trade to any future acquisition south of the Rio Grande.

This brought the South to war with the farmers and laborers in the North and West, who wanted free soil but did not want to compete with slave labor. The fugitive slave law of 1850 vastly extended Federal power so as to nullify state rights in the North. The Compromise of 1850 permitted the extension of slavery into the territories, and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, 1854, deprived Congress of the right to prohibit slavery anywhere. This opened the entire West to slavery. War followed in Kansas. Slaveholders went boldly into Kansas, armed and organized:

“The invaders went in such force that the scattered and unorganized citizens could make no resistance and in many places they did not attempt to vote, seeing the polls surrounded by crowds of armed men who they knew came from Missouri to control the election and the leaders of the invaders kept their men under control, being anxious to prevent needless violence, as any serious outbreak would attract the attention of the country. In some districts the actual citizens protested against the election and petitioned the governor to set it aside and order another.

“We can tell the impertinent scoundrels of the Tribune that we will continue to lynch and hang, to tar and feather and drown every white-livered Abolitionist who dares to pollute our soil.”⁵ Shut out from the United States territories by the Free Soil movement, the South determined upon secession with the distinct idea of eventually expanding into the Caribbean.

There was, however, the opposition in the Border States. The employers of labor in the Border States had found a new source of revenue. They did not like to admit it. They surrounded it with a certain secrecy, and it was exceedingly bad taste for any Virginia planter to have it indicated that he was deliberately raising slaves for sale; and yet that was a fact.

In no respect are the peculiar psychological difficulties of the planters better illustrated than with regard to the interstate slave trade. The theory was clear and lofty; slaves were a part of the family—“my people,” George Washington called them. Under ordinary circumstances they were never to be alienated, but supported during good behavior and bad, punished and corrected for

crime and misdemeanor, rewarded for good conduct. It was the patriarchal clan translated into modern life, with social, religious, economic and even blood ties.

This was the theory; but as a matter of fact, the cotton planters were supplied with laborers by the Border States. A laboring stock was deliberately bred for legal sale. A large number of persons followed the profession of promoting this sale of slaves. There were markets and quotations, and the stream of black labor, moving continuously into the South, reached yearly into the thousands.

Notwithstanding these perfectly clear and authenticated facts, the planter persistently denied them. He denied that there was any considerable interstate sale of slaves; he denied that families were broken up; he insisted that slave auctions were due to death or mischance, and particularly did he insist that the slave traders were the least of human beings and most despised.

This deliberate contradiction of plain facts constitutes itself a major charge against slavery and shows how the system often so affronted the moral sense of the planters themselves that they tried to hide from it. They could not face the fact of Negro women as brood mares and of black children as puppies.

Indeed, while we speak of the planters as one essentially unvarying group, there is evidence that the necessities of their economic organization were continually changing and deteriorating their morale and pushing forward ruder, noisier, less cultivated elements than characterized the Southern gentleman of earlier days. Certainly, the cursing, brawling, whoring gamblers who largely represented the South in the late fifties, evidenced the inevitable deterioration that overtakes men when their desire for income and extravagance overwhelms their respect for human beings. Thus the interstate slave trade grew and flourished and the demand for the African slave trade was rapidly becoming irresistible in the late fifties.

From fifty to eighty thousand slaves went from the Border States to the lower South in the last decade of slavery. One planter frankly said that he "calculated that the moment a colored baby was born, it was worth to him \$300." So far as possible, the planters in selling off their slaves avoided the breaking up of families. But they were facing flat economic facts. The persons who were buying slaves in the cotton belt were not buying families, they were buying workers, and thus by economic demand families were continually and regularly broken up; the father was sold away; the mother and the half-grown children separated, and sometimes smaller children were sold. One of the subsequent tragedies of the system was the frantic efforts, before and after emancipation, of Negroes hunting for their relatives throughout the United States.

A Southerner wrote to Olmsted: "In the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri, as much attention is paid to the breeding and growth of Negroes as to that of horses and mules. Further south, we raise them both for use and for market. Planters command their girls and women (married or unmarried) to have children; and I have known a great many Negro girls to be sold off because they did not have children. A breeding woman is worth from one-sixth to one-fourth more than one that does not breed."

Sexual chaos arose from economic motives. The deliberate breeding of a strong, big field-hand stock could be carried out by selecting proper males, and giving them the run of the likeliest females. This in many Border States became a regular policy and fed the slave trade. Child-bearing was a profitable occupation, which received every possible encouragement, and there was not only no bar to illegitimacy, but an actual premium put upon it. Indeed, the word was impossible of meaning under the slave system.

Moncure D. Conway, whose father was a slaveholder near Fredericksburg, Virginia, wrote: "As a general thing, the chief pecuniary resource in the Border States is the breeding of slaves; and I grieve to say that there is too much ground for the charges that general licentiousness among the

slaves, for the purpose of a large increase, is compelled by some masters and encouraged by many. The period of maternity is hastened, the average youth of Negro mothers being nearly three years earlier than that of any free race, and an old maid is utterly unknown among the women.”

J. E. Cairnes, the English economist, in his passage with Mr. McHenry on this subject, computed from reliable data that Virginia, had bred and exported to the cotton states between the years of 1840 and 1850 no less than 100,000 slaves, which at \$500 per head would have yielded her \$50,000,000.

The law sometimes forbade the breaking up of slave families but:

“Not one of these prohibitions, save those of Louisiana, and they but slightly, in any way referred to or hampered the owner of unencumbered slave property: he might sell or pawn or mortgage or give it away according to profit or whim, regardless of age or kinship.

“Elsewhere in the typical South—in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas and Texas—there seems to have been no restriction of any sort against separating mothers and children or husbands and wives or selling children of any age. Slavery was, indeed, a ‘peculiar institution.’ ”⁶

The slave-trading Border States, therefore, in their own economic interest, frantically defended slavery, yet opposed the reopening of the African slave trade to which the Southern South was becoming more and more attracted. This slave trade had curious psychological effects upon the planter. When George Washington sold a slave to the West Indies for one hogshead “of best rum” and molasses and sweetmeats, it was because “this fellow is both a rogue and a runaway.”⁷

Thus tradition grew up that the sale of a slave from a gentleman’s plantation was for special cause. As time went on and slavery became systematized and commercialized under the Cotton Kingdom, this was absolutely untrue. The “buying or selling of slaves was not viewed as having any taint of ‘hated’ slave-trading; yet it early became a fully credited tradition, implicitly accepted generation after generation, that ‘all traders were hated.’ ”⁸

The sacrifices necessary for economic advance, Southern planters were on the whole too selfish and too provincial to make. They would not in any degree curtail consumption in order to furnish at least part of the necessary increase of capital and make dependence upon debt to the North and to Europe less necessary. They did not socialize the ownership of the slave on any large scale or educate him in technique; they did not encourage local and auxiliary industry or manufacture, and thus make it possible for their own profit to exploit white labor and give it an economic foothold. This would have involved, to be sure, increased recognition of democracy, and far from yielding to any such inevitable development, the South threw itself into the arms of a reaction at least two centuries out of date. Governor McDuffie of South Carolina called the laboring class, bleached or unbleached, a “dangerous” element in the population.

A curious argument appeared in the *Charleston Mercury* of 1861:

“Within ten years past as many as ten thousand slaves have been drawn away from Charleston by the attractive prices of the West, and [white] laborers from abroad have come to take their places. These laborers have every disposition to work above the slave, and if there were opportunity, would be glad to do so; but without such opportunity they come into competition with him; they are necessarily restive to the contact. Already there is disposition to exclude him from the trades, from public works, from drays, and the tables of the hotels; he is even now excluded to a great extent, and... when more laborers... shall come in greater numbers to the South, they will still more increase the tendency to exclusion; they will question the right of masters to employ their slaves in any work that they may wish for; they will invoke the aid of legislation; they will use the elective franchise to that end; they will acquire the power to determine municipal elections; they will inexorably use it;

and thus the town of Charleston, at the very heart of slavery, may become a fortress of democratic power against it.”

The planters entirely misconceived the extent to which democracy was spreading in the North. They thought it meant that the laboring class was going to rule the North for labor’s own economic interests. Even those who saw the seamy side of slavery were convinced of the Tightness of the system because they believed that there were seeds of disaster in the North against which slavery would be their protection; “indications that these are already beginning to be felt or anticipated by prophetic minds, they think they see in the demands for ‘Land Limitation,’ in the anti-rent troubles, in strikes of workmen, in the distress of emigrants at the eddies of their current, in diseased philanthropy, in radical democracy, and in the progress of socialistic ideas in general. ‘The North,’ say they, ‘has progressed under the high pressure of unlimited competition; as the population grows denser, there will be terrific explosions, disaster, and ruin, while they will ride quietly and safely at the anchor of slavery.’”⁹

Thus the planters of the South walked straight into the face of modern economic progress. The North had yielded to democracy, but only because democracy was curbed by a dictatorship of property and investment which left in the hands of the leaders of industry such economic power as insured their mastery and their profits. Less than this they knew perfectly well they could not yield, and more than this they would not. They remained masters of the economic destiny of America.

In the South, on the other hand, the planters walked in quite the opposite direction, excluding the poor whites from nearly every economic foothold with apparently no conception of the danger of these five million workers who, in time, overthrew the planters and utterly submerged them after the Civil War; and the South was equally determined to regard its four million slaves as a class of submerged workers and to this ideal they and their successors still cling.

Calhoun once said with perfect truth: There has never yet existed “a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other.” Governor McDufne of South Carolina said: “God forbid that my descendants, in the remotest generations, should live in any other than a community having the institution of domestic slavery.”¹⁰

The South elected to make its fight through the political power which it possessed because of slavery and the disfranchisement of the poor whites. It had in American history chosen eleven out of sixteen Presidents, seventeen out of twenty-eight Judges of the Supreme Court, fourteen out of nineteen Attorneys-General, twenty-one out of thirty-three Speakers of the House, eighty out of one hundred thirty-four Foreign Ministers. It demanded a fugitive slave law as strong as words could make it and it was offered constitutional guarantees which would have made it impossible for the North to meddle with the organization of the slave empire.

The South was assured of all the territory southwest of Missouri and as far as California. It might even have extended its imperialistic sway toward the Caribbean without effective opposition from the North or Europe. The South had conquered Mexico without help and beyond lay the rest of Mexico, the West Indies and South America, open to Southern imperialistic enterprise. The South dominated the Army and Navy. It argued that a much larger proportion of the population could go to war in the South than in the North. There might, of course, be danger of slave insurrection in a long war with actual invasion, but the possibility of a long war or any war at all Southerners discounted, and they looked confidently forward to being either an independent section of the United States or an independent country with a stable economic foundation which could dictate its terms to the modern world on the basis of a monopoly of cotton, and a large production of other essential raw materials.

The South was too ignorant to know that their only chance to establish such economic dictatorship and place themselves in a key economic position was through a national economy, in a large nation where a home market would absorb a large proportion of the production, and where agriculture, led by men of vision, could demand a fair share of profit from industry.

When, therefore, the planters surrendered this chance and went to war with the machine to establish agricultural independence, they lost because of their internal weakness. Their whole labor class, black and white, went into economic revolt. The breach could only have been healed by making the same concessions to labor that France, England, Germany and the North had made. There was no time for such change in the midst of war. Northern industry must, therefore, after the war, make the adjustment with labor which Southern agriculture refused to make. But the loss which agriculture sustained through the stubbornness of the planters led to the degradation of agriculture throughout the modern world.

Due to the stubbornness of the South and the capitalism of the West, we have had built up in the world an agriculture with a minimum of machines and new methods, conducted by ignorant labor and producing raw materials used by industry equipped with machines and intelligent labor, and conducted by shrewd business men. The result has been that a disproportionate part of the profit of organized work has gone to industry, while the agricultural laborer has descended toward slavery. The West, instead of becoming a country of peasant proprietors who might have counteracted this result, surrendered itself hand and foot to capitalism and speculation in land.

The abolition of American slavery started the transportation of capital from white to black countries where slavery prevailed, with the same tremendous and awful consequences upon the laboring classes of the world which we see about us today. When raw material could not be raised in a country like the United States, it could be raised in the tropics and semi-tropics under a dictatorship of industry, commerce and manufacture and with no free farming class.

The competition of a slave-directed agriculture in the West Indies and South America, in Africa and Asia, eventually ruined the economic efficiency of agriculture in the United States and in Europe and precipitated the modern economic degradation of the white farmer, while it put into the hands of the owners of the machine such a monopoly of raw material that their domination of white labor was more and more complete.

The crisis came in 1860, not so much because Abraham Lincoln was elected President on a platform which refused further land for the expansion of slavery, but because the cotton crop of 1859 reached the phenomenal height of five million bales as compared with three million in 1850. To this was added the threat of radical abolition as represented by John Brown. The South feared these social upheavals but it was spurred to immediate action by the great cotton crop. Starting with South Carolina, the Southern cotton-raising and slave-consuming states were forced out of the Union.

Their reason for doing this was clearly stated and reiterated. For a generation, belief in slavery was the Southern shibboleth:

“A suspicion of heresy on the subject of the ‘peculiar institution’ was sufficient to declare the ineligibility of any candidate for office; nay, more, orthodoxy began to depend upon the correct attitude toward the doctrine of ‘Squatter Sovereignty’ and the extreme view held as to Federal protection of slavery in the territories.”¹¹

Jefferson Davis said that the North was “impairing the security of property and slaves and reducing those states which held slaves to a condition of inferiority.”

Senator Toombs said that property and slaves must be entitled to the same protection from the government as any other property. The South Carolina convention arraigned the North for

increasing hostility “to the institution of slavery,” and declared for secession because the North had assumed the right of deciding upon the propriety of Southern domestic institutions.

Governor R. C. Wickliffe in his message at the extra session of the legislature of Louisiana expressed his belief that the election was “a deliberate design to pervert the powers of the Government to the immediate injury and ultimate destruction of the peculiar institution of the South.”¹²

Slidel’s farewell speech in the Congressional Globe of February 5, 1861:

“We separate,” he said, “because of the hostility of Lincoln to our institutions... If he were inaugurated without our consent there would be slave insurrections in the South.”¹³

The Alabama Commissioner to Maryland arraigned the Lincoln government as proposing not “to recognize the right of the Southern citizens to property in the labor of African slaves.” The Governor of Alabama arraigned the Republicans for desiring “the destruction of the institution of slavery.”

In the Southern Congress, at Montgomery on the 2d of February, 1861, Senator Wigfall, from Texas, said that he was fighting for slavery, and for nothing else. The patent of nobility is in the color of the skin. He wanted to live in no country in which a man who blacked his boots and carried his horse was his equal. Give Negroes muskets and make them soldiers, and the next subject introduced for discussion will be miscegenation.¹⁴ And finally, Alexander H. Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, stated fully the philosophy of the new Confederate government: “The new Constitution has put at rest forever all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institutions—African slavery as it exists among us—the proper status of the Negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson, in his forecast, had anticipated this as the rock upon which the old union would split! He was right. What was conjecture with him is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other, in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away... Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the idea of a government built upon it; when the ‘storm came and the winds blew, it fell.’

“Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea, its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man. That slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world, based upon this great physical and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It has been so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well, that this truth was not generally admitted, even within their day...

“Now they are universally acknowledged. May we not, therefore, look with confidence to the ultimate universal acknowledgment of the truths upon which our system rests. It is the first government ever instituted upon principles of strict conformity to nature, and the ordination of Providence, in furnishing the materials of human society. Many governments have been founded upon the principle of certain classes; but the classes thus enslaved, were of the same race, and in violation of the laws of nature. Our system commits no such violation of nature’s laws. The Negro, by nature, or by the curse against Canaan, is fitted for that condition which he occupies in our system. The architect, in

the construction of buildings, lays the foundation with the proper materials, the granite; then comes the brick or the marble. The substratum of our society is made of the material fitted by nature for it, and by experience we know that it is best, not only for the superior, but for the inferior race that it should be so. It is, indeed, in conformity with the ordinance of the Creator. It is not for us to inquire into the wisdom of His ordinances, or to question them. For His own purposes He has made one race to differ from another, as He has had 'one star to differ from another star in glory.'¹⁵

The rift between the Southern South and the Border States was bridged by omission of all reference to the reopening of the slave trade and stressing the reality of the Northern attack upon the institution of slavery itself.

The movement against the slave trade laws in the Southern South was strong and growing. In 1854, a grand jury in the Williamsburg district of South Carolina declared: "As our unanimous opinion, that the Federal law abolishing the African Slave Trade is a public grievance. We hold this trade has been and would be, if reestablished, a blessing to the American people and a benefit to the African himself."

Two years later, the Governor of the state in his annual message argued for a reopening of the trade and declared: "If we cannot supply the demand for slave labor, then we must expect to be supplied with a species of labor we do not want" (i.e., free white labor). The movement was forwarded by the commercial conventions. In 1855, at New Orleans, a resolution for the repeal of the slave trade laws was introduced but not reported by committee. In 1856, at Savannah, the convention refused to debate the matter of the repeal of the slave trade laws but appointed a committee. At the convention at Knoxville, in 1857, a resolution declaring it inexpedient to reopen the trade was voted down. At Montgomery, in 1858, a committee presented an elaborate majority report declaring it "expedient and proper that the foreign slave trade should be reopened." After debate, it was decided that it was inexpedient for any single state to attempt to reopen the African slave trade while that state is one of the United States of America. Finally, at Vicksburg in 1859, it was voted 40–19, "that all laws, state or Federal, prohibiting the African slave trade, ought to be repealed."

Both the provisional and permanent constitutions of the Confederate states forbade the importation of Negroes from foreign countries, except the "slave-holding states or territories of the United States of America." Nevertheless, the foreign ministers of the Confederate states were assured that while the Confederate government had no power to reopen the slave trade, the states could, if they wanted to, and that the ministers were not to discuss any treaties to prohibit the trade.¹⁶

Thus the planters led the South into war, carrying the five million poor whites blindly with them and standing upon a creed which opposed the free distribution of government land; which asked for the expansion of slave territory, for restricted functions of the national government, and for the perpetuity of Negro slavery.

What irritated the planter and made him charge the North and liberal Europe with hypocrisy, was the ethical implications of slavery. He was kept explaining a system of work which he insisted was no different in essence from that in vogue in Europe and the North. They and he were all exploiting labor. He did it by individual right; they by state law. They called their labor free, but after all, the laborer was only free to starve, if he did not work on their terms. They called his laborer a slave when his master was responsible for him from birth to death.

The Southern argument had strong backing in the commercial North. Lawyer O'Conner of New York expressed amid applause that calm reasoned estimate of the Negro in 1859, which pervaded the North:

“Now, Gentlemen, nature itself has assigned his condition of servitude to the Negro. He has the strength and is fit to work; but nature, which gave him this strength, denied him both the intelligence to rule and the will to work. Both are denied to him. And the same nature which denied him the will to work, gave him a master, who should enforce this will, and make a useful servant of him in a climate to which he is well adapted for his own benefit and that of the master who rules him. I assert that it is no injustice to leave the Negro in the position into which nature placed him; to put a master over him; and he is not robbed of any right, if he is compelled to labor in return for this, and to supply a just compensation for his master in return for the labor and the talents devoted to ruling him and to making him useful to himself and to society.”

What the planter and his Northern apologist did not readily admit was that this exploitation of labor reduced it to a wage so low and a standard of living so pitiable that no modern industry in agriculture or trade or manufacture could build upon it; that it made ignorance compulsory and had to do so in self-defense; and that it automatically was keeping the South from entering the great stream of modern industry where growing intelligence among workers, a rising standard of living among the masses, increased personal freedom and political power, were recognized as absolutely necessary.

The ethical problem here presented was less important than the political and far less than the economic. The Southerners were as little conscious of the hurt they were inflicting on human beings as the Northerners were of their treatment of the insane. It is easy for men to discount and misunderstand the suffering or harm done others. Once accustomed to poverty, to the sight of toil and degradation, it easily seems normal and natural; once it is hidden beneath a different color of skin, a different stature or a different habit of action and speech, and all consciousness of inflicting ill disappears.

The Southern planter suffered, not simply for his economic mistakes—the psychological effect of slavery upon him was fatal. The mere fact that a man could be, under the law, the actual master of the mind and body of human beings had to have disastrous effects. It tended to inflate the ego of most planters beyond all reason; they became arrogant, strutting, quarrelsome kinglets; they issued commands; they made laws; they shouted their orders; they expected deference and self-abasement; they were choleric and easily insulted. Their “honor” became a vast and awful thing, requiring wide and insistent deference. Such of them as were inherently weak and inefficient were all the more easily angered, jealous and resentful; while the few who were superior, physically or mentally, conceived no bounds to their power and personal prestige. As the world had long learned, nothing is so calculated to ruin human nature as absolute power over human beings.

On the other hand, the possession of such power did not and could not lead to its continued tyrannical exercise. The tyrant could be kind and congenial. He could care for his chattels like a father; he could grant indulgence and largess; he could play with power and find tremendous satisfaction in its benevolent use.

Thus, economically and morally, the situation of the planter became intolerable. What was needed was the force of great public opinion to make him see his economic mistakes and the moral debauchery that threatened him. But here again in the planter class no room was made for the reformer, the recalcitrant. The men who dared such thought and act were driven out or suppressed with a virulent tyranny reminiscent of the Inquisition and the Reformation. For these there was the same peculiar way of escape that lay before the slave. The planter who could not stand slavery followed the poor whites who could not stand Negroes, they followed the Negro who also could not stand slavery, into the North; and there, removed from immediate contact with the evils of slavery, the planter often became the “copperhead,” and theoretical champion of a system which he could

not himself endure.

Frederick Douglass thus summed up the objects of the white planter:

“I understand this policy to comprehend five cardinal objects. They are these: 1st, The complete suppression of all anti-slavery discussion. 2d, The expatriation of the entire free people of color from the United States. 3d, The unending perpetuation of slavery in this republic. 4th, The nationalization of slavery to the extent of making slavery respected in every state of the Union. 5th, The extension of slavery over Mexico and the entire South American states.”¹⁷

This whole system and plan of development failed, and failed of its own weakness. Unending effort has gone into painting the claims of the Old South, its idyllic beauty and social charm. But the truth is inexorable. With all its fine men and sacrificing women, its hospitable homes and graceful manners, the South turned the most beautiful section of the nation into a center of poverty and suffering, of drinking, gambling and brawling; an abode of ignorance among black and white more abysmal than in any modern land; and a system of industry so humanly unjust and economically inefficient that if it had not committed suicide in civil war, it would have disintegrated of its own weight.

With the Civil War, the planters died as a class. We still talk as though the dominant social class in the South persisted after the war. But it did not. It disappeared. Just how quickly and in what manner the transformation was made, we do not know. No scientific study of the submergence of the remainder of the planter class into the ranks of the poor whites, and the corresponding rise of a portion of the poor whites into the dominant portion of landholders and capitalists, has been made. Of the names of prominent Southern families in Congress in 1860, only two appear in 1870, five in 1880. Of 90 prominent names in 1870, only four survived in 1880. Men talk today as though the upper class in the white South is descended from the slaveholders; yet we know by plain mathematics that the ancestors of most of the present Southerners never owned a slave nor had any real economic part in slavery. The disaster of war decimated the planters; the bitter disappointment and frustration led to a tremendous mortality after the war, and from 1870 on the planter class merged their blood so completely with the rising poor whites that they disappeared as a separate aristocracy. It is this that explains so many characteristics of the post-war South: its lynching and mob law, its murders and cruelty, its insensibility to the finer things of civilization.

Not spring; from us no agony of birth
Is asked or needed; in a crimson tide
Upon the down-slope of the world
We, the elect, are hurled
In fearful power and brief pride
Burning at last to silence and dark earth.
Not Spring.
—James Rorty

* Quoted in speech of Charles Sumner, in the United States Senate, December 20, 1865, from “a private letter which I have received from a government officer.” *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, p. 93, Column 2.

¹ Nevin, *American Social History as Recorded by British Travellers*, p. 209.

² Trollope, Frances, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, p. 10.

³ *An Appeal of a Colored Man to His Fellow-Citizens of a Fairer Hue, in the United States*, 1877,

pp. 33, 34.

⁴ Goodell, *American Slave Code*

⁵ Brewster, *Sketches of Southern Mystery, Treason and Murder*, pp. 48, 51.

⁶ Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*, p. 199.

⁷ Mazyck, *George Washington and the Negro*, p. 13.

⁸ Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*, p. 381.

⁹ Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, pp. 183–184.

¹⁰ *Studies in Southern History and Politics*, footnote, pp. 329, 346.

¹¹ Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, p. 12.

¹² Ficklen, *Reconstruction in Louisiana*, p. 15.

¹³ Ficklen, *Reconstruction in Louisiana*, p. 27.

¹⁴ *New Orleans Tribune*, February 15, 1865.

¹⁵ Stewart, *The Reward of Patriotism*, pp. 41–43.

¹⁶ Compare Du Bois, *Suppression of Slave-Trade*, Chapter XI.

¹⁷ Woodson, *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, p. 224.

Week 2

Socialism, Communism and the Negro Question

The Bolsheviks taking power amidst the wreckage of the Russian Empire was but one of the many upheavals sparked by the destruction of World War I. While no revolution was near occurring in the United States, some authorities believed one could, prompting a crackdown on radicals known as the first Red Scare. Anti-communism combined with racism in the Red Summer of 1919, in which demobilized white soldiers conducted race riots against Blacks who had been recruited into their former jobs from the South because of wartime labor shortages.

It was from this milieu that several different political tendencies competed for influence among Blacks. By far the most successful was Marcus Garvey's UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association), a Black nationalist movement which advocated Black return to Africa. However, Garvey discredited himself by meeting with the Ku Klux Klan, presiding over the UNIA's financial shenanigans and mounting vituperative racial attacks on rivals, such as Du Bois.

The Socialist Party, of which Hubert Harrison was a prominent Black member, failed to appeal to a large Black population because of its subsumption of racial oppression under class oppression and failure to hold mixed-race meetings where it was illegal. The African Blood Brotherhood was a relatively small propaganda organization that eventually was recruited into the nascent American Communist Party. Claude McKay, a poet sympathetic to Communism, visited Moscow to present to the Comintern at its Fourth World Congress on the status of Blacks in America.

Du Bois, disillusioned with less radical efforts to achieve Black liberation, eventually joined the Communist Party USA shortly before his death in 1963, a day before the storied March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

2.1 Marcus Garvey, An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself (1923)

It is said to be a hard and difficult task to organize and keep together large numbers of the Negro race for the common good. Many have tried to congregate us, but have failed, the reason being that our characteristics are such as to keep us more apart than together.

The evil of internal division is wrecking our existence as a people, and if we do not seriously and quickly move in the direction of a readjustment it simply means that our doom becomes imminently conclusive.

For years the Universal Negro Improvement Association has been working for the unification of our race, not on domestic-national lines only, but universally. The success which we have met in the course of our effort is rather encouraging, considering the time consumed and the environment surrounding the object of our concern.

It seems that the whole world of sentiment is against the Negro, and the difficulty of our generation is to extricate ourselves from the prejudice that hides itself beneath, as well as above, the action of an international environment.

Prejudice is conditional on many reasons, and it is apparent that the Negro supplies, consciously or unconsciously, all the reasons by which the world seems to ignore and avoid him. No one cares for a leper, for lepers are infectious persons, and all are afraid of the disease, so, because the Negro keeps himself poor, helpless and undemonstrative, it is natural also that no one wants to be of him or with him.

Process And Humanity

Progress is the attraction that moves humanity, and to whatever people or race this “modern virtue” attaches itself, there will you find the splendor of pride and self-esteem that never fail to win the respect and admiration of all.

It is the progress of the Anglo-Saxons that singles them out for the respect of all the world. When their race had no progress or achievement to its credit, then, like all other inferior peoples, they paid the price in slavery, bondage, as well as through prejudice. We cannot forget the time when even the ancient Briton was regarded as being too dull to make a good Roman slave, yet today the influence of that race rules the world.

It is the industrial and commercial progress of America that causes Europe and the rest of the world to think appreciatively of the Anglo-American race. It is not because one hundred and ten million people live in the United States that the world is attracted to the republic with so much reverence and respect—a reverence and respect not shown to India with its three hundred millions, or to China with its four hundred millions. Progress of and among any people will advance them in the respect and appreciation of the rest of their fellows. It is such a progress that the Negro must attach to himself if he is to rise above the prejudice of the world.

The reliance of our race upon the progress and achievements of others for a consideration in sympathy, justice and rights is like a dependence upon a broken stick, resting upon which will eventually consign you to the ground.

Self-Reliance And Respect

The Universal Negro Improvement Association teaches our race self-help and self-reliance, not only in one essential, but in all those things that contribute to human happiness and well-being. The disposition of the many to depend upon the other races for a kindly and sympathetic consideration of their needs, without making the effort to do for themselves, has been the race’s standing disgrace by which we have been judged and through which we have created the strongest prejudice against ourselves.

There is no force like success, and that is why the individual makes all efforts to surround himself throughout life with the evidence of it. As of the individual, so should it be of the race

and nation. The glittering success of Rockefeller makes him a power in the American nation; the success of Henry Ford suggests him as an object of universal respect, but no one knows and cares about the bum or hobo who is Rockefeller's or Ford's neighbor. So, also, is the world attracted by the glittering success of races and nations, and pays absolutely no attention to the bum or hobo race that lingers by the wayside.

The Negro must be up and doing if he will break down the prejudice of the rest of the world. Prayer alone is not going to improve our condition, nor the policy of watchful waiting. We must strike out for ourselves in the course of material achievement, and by our own effort and energy present to the world those forces by which the progress of man is judged.

A Nation And Country

The Negro needs a nation and a country of his own, where he can best show evidence of his own ability in the art of human progress. Scattered as an unmixed and unrecognized part of alien nations and civilizations is but to demonstrate his imbecility, and point him out as an unworthy derelict, fit neither for the society of Greek, Jew nor Gentile.

It is unfortunate that we should so drift apart, as a race, as not to see that we are but perpetuating our own sorrow and disgrace in failing to appreciate the first great requisite of all peoples-organization.

Organization is a great power in directing the affairs of a race or nation toward a given goal. To properly develop the desires that are uppermost, we must first concentrate through some system or method, and there is none better than organization. Hence, the Universal Negro Improvement Association appeals to each and every Negro to throw in his lot with those of us who, through organization, are working for the universal emancipation of our race and the redemption of our common country, Africa.

No Negro, let him be American, European, West Indian or African, shall be truly respected until the race as a whole has emancipated itself, through self-achievement and progress, from universal prejudice. The Negro will have to build his own government, industry, art, science, literature and culture, before the world will stop to consider him. Until then, we are but wards of a superior race and civilization, and the outcasts of a standard social system.

The race needs workers at this time, not plagiarists, copyists and mere imitators; but men and women who are able to create, to originate and improve, and thus make an independent racial contribution to the world and civilization.

Monkey Apings Of "Leaders"

The unfortunate thing about us is that we take the monkey apings of our "so-called leading men" for progress. There is no progress in aping white people and telling us that they represent the best in the race, for in that respect any dressed monkey would represent the best of its species, irrespective of the creative matter of the monkey instinct. The best in a race is not reflected through or by the action of its apes, but by its ability to create of and by itself. It is such a creation that the Universal Negro Improvement Association seeks.

Let us not try to be the best or worst of others, but let us make the effort to be the best of ourselves. Our own racial critics criticise us as dreamers and "fanatics," and call us "benighted" and "ignorant," because they lack racial backbone. They are unable to see themselves creators of their own needs. The slave instinct has not yet departed from them. They still believe that they can only

live or exist through the good graces of their “masters.” The good slaves have not yet thrown off their shackles; thus, to them, the Universal Negro Improvement Association is an “impossibility.”

It is the slave spirit of dependence that causes our “so-called leading men” (apes) to seek the shelter, leadership, protection and patronage of the “master” in their organization and so-called advancement work. It is the spirit of feeling secured as good servants of the master, rather than as independents, why our modern Uncle Toms take pride in laboring under alien leadership and becoming surprised at the audacity of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in proclaiming for racial liberty and independence.

But the world of white and other men, deep down in their hearts, have much more respect for those of us who work for our racial salvation under the banner of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, than they could ever have in all eternity for a group of helpless apes and beggars who make a monopoly of undermining their own race and belittling themselves in the eyes of self-respecting people, by being “good boys” rather than able men.

Surely there can be no good will between apes, seasoned beggars and independent minded Negroes who will at least make an effort to do for themselves. Surely, the “dependents” and “wards” (and may I not say racial imbeciles?) will rave against and plan the destruction of movements like the Universal Negro Improvement Association that expose them to the liberal white minds of the world as not being representative of the best in the Negro, but, to the contrary, the worst. The best of a race does not live on the patronage and philanthropy of others, but makes an effort to do for itself. The best of the great white race doesn’t fawn before and beg black, brown or yellow men; they go out, create for self and thus demonstrate the fitness of the race to survive; and so the white race of America and the world will be informed that the best in the Negro race is not the class of beggars who send out to other races piteous appeals annually for donations to maintain their coterie, but the groups within us that are honestly striving to do for themselves with the voluntary help and appreciation of that class of other races that is reasonable, just and liberal enough to give to each and every one a fair chance in the promotion of those ideals that tend to greater human progress and human love.

The work of the Universal Negro Improvement Association is clear and clean-cut. It is that of inspiring an unfortunate race with pride in self and with the determination of going ahead in the creation of those ideals that will lift them to the unprejudiced company of races and nations. There is no desire for hate or malice, but every wish to see all mankind linked into a common fraternity of progress and achievement that will wipe away the odor of prejudice, and elevate the human race to the height of real godly love and satisfaction.

2.2 Hubert Harrison, What Socialism Means to Us (1917)

In the good old days “when cotton was king,” chattel-slavery was a flourishing institution. Not only the people who profited by the system, but most others—even those who were the sufferers—thought that this was really a “law of nature,” that it couldn’t be otherwise. Nevertheless, chattel slavery has gone. But while it lasted this was its essence: Certain human beings were compelled to labor and the wealth which their labor produced went, not to them, but to certain other human beings who did not labor at all but lolled in luxury on the labor of their slaves.

To-day, fellow-sufferers, they tell us that we are free. But are we? If you will think for a moment you will see that we are not free at all. We have simply changed one form of slavery for another. Then it was chattel-slavery, now it is wage-slavery. For that which was the essence of chattel-slavery is the essence of wage slavery. It is only a difference in form. The chattel-slave was compelled to

work by physical force; the wage-slave is compelled to work by starvation. The product of the chattel-slave's labor was taken by his master; the product of the wage-slave's labor is taken by the employer.

The United States Government has made a study of the wealth producing power of the wage-slaves, and has shown that the average worker produces \$2,451 a year. The government has also made a study of wages in the U. S. which shows that the average worker gets \$437 a year. This means that the average employer takes away from the average wage-slave \$2,014 a year. In the good old days the master took away the wealth produced by the slave in the simplest form; today he takes it away in the form of profits. But in one respect the wage-slave is worse off than the chattel slave. Under chattel slavery the master owned the man and the land; he had to feed and clothe the man. Under wage-slavery the man feeds and clothes himself. Under chattel slavery it was to the interest of the owner to give the slave work and to keep him from starving to death. Under wage-slavery, if the man goes out of work the employer doesn't care; that is no loss to him; and if the man dies there are millions of others eager to take his place, because, as I said before, they must either work for him or starve. There is one very striking parallel between the two cases. To-day there are many people who say that this system is divinely appointed—is a law of nature—just as they said the same thing of chattel slavery. Well, there are millions of workers who say that it is wrong. Under chattel-slavery black workers were robbed; under wage-slavery all the workers are robbed. The Socialist Party says that this robbing shall cease; that no worker black or white shall be exploited for profit. And it says, further, that there is one sure and certain way of putting an end to the system and that is by working for the success of Socialism.

But, before I tell you just how Socialism proposes to do this, let me say a word about the Civil War which put an end to chattel-slavery. Now, I know that certain people have taught you to believe that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves. But it isn't true, at all, and only very ignorant people hold that opinion nowadays. If you will read the Emancipation Proclamation carefully you will see that it wasn't for love of the slave that the slaves were freed. You will see that this was done, "as a fit and necessary war-measure for suppressing said rebellion." If you will read Lincoln's letter to Horace Greeley (August 22nd 1862) you will find this sentence: My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or destroy slavery." Now I will tell you briefly how "this struggle" came about.

I know that my explanation is not the one which you have been taught. But, no matter; it happens to be true. This was the way of it: In the South there had grown up one system of exploiting the laborer. That was chattel-slavery. The money-Kings of that section whom we will call capitalists, for short, were naturally fond of their own system. In the North the capitalists had another system of which they were equally fond. That was wage-slavery. The Southern capitalists found that it was necessary to extend their system; so we had the Mexican War, and they got Texas. Then, as fast as new territory was opened they would rush to occupy it with their system and so shut out the Northern system. Of course, the Northern capitalists would try to get their system into the new territory also; so we had the long struggle over Kansas and Nebraska. These two systems were then in open competition and it came to be seen that one or the other had to give in; that both of them couldn't exist in the same country; that "a house divided against itself cannot stand"; that "this nation cannot exist half-slave and half-free." Then people began to talk of "the impending crisis"; of "the irrepressible conflict." Then, when Lincoln was elected in 1859, the southern capitalists saw that their system was doomed. They wished to preserve it; so they seceded and tried to make of themselves a separate nation in which their system of robbing the worker should be the only one. But the Northern capitalists said, "Nix! Our system shall be the

only system.” So they went to war “to save the Union”—for their system of robbing the workers. And that’s the gist of the whole story.

“But,” you will say, “didn’t they go to war on account of John Brown and Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison and Charles Sumner?” Not on your life, they didn’t. If you will read the newspapers of that time you will see that they tried to lynch Garrison in Boston; they ostracized Wendell Phillips; they sneered at Sumner and damned John Brown. Why, nice, good, Christian people told them they were crazy—just as some of them tell Socialists now—and the anti-slavery orators couldn’t get the use of a church in New York either for love or for money. No, indeed. These men were grand old heroes—but no war was fought on their account. The older system of chattel-slavery simply broke down to make way for the present system of wage-slavery, which pays better. Pays the capitalist, I mean.

Under the old system the capitalist owned the man; today he owns the tools with which the man must work. These tools are the factories, the mines, and the machines. The system that owns them owns you and me and all the rest of us, black, white, brown, red, and yellow. We can’t live unless we have access to these tools, and our masters, the capitalists, see to it that we are separated from what we make by using these things, except so much as is necessary to keep us alive that we may be able to make more—for them. This little bit is called wages. They wouldn’t give us even that if they thought that we could live without it. In the good old days the chattel-slave would be fastened with a chain if they thought that he might escape. Today no chain is necessary to bind us to the tools. We are as free as air. Of course. We are free to starve. And that chain of the-fear-of-starvation binds us to the tools owned by the capitalist as firmly as any iron chain ever did. And this system doesn’t care whether the slaves who are bound in this new way are white or black. To the capitalist system all workers are equal—in so far as they have a stomach.

Now the one great fact for the Negro in America today is Race Prejudice. The great labor problem with which all working-people are faced is made harder for black working-people by the addition of a race problem. I want to show you how one grows out of the other and how, at bottom, they are both the same thing. In other words, I want you to see the economic reason for race prejudice.

In the first place, do you know that the most rabid, Negro-hating, southern aristocrat has not the slightest objection to sleeping in the same house with a Negro—if that Negro sleeps there as his servant? He doesn’t care if his food is prepared by a Negro cook and handled by a Negro waiter before it gets to him; he will eat it. But if a Negro comes into the same public restaurant to buy and eat food, then, Oh my!, he gets all het [fed] up about it. But why? What’s the difference? I will tell you. The aristocrat wants the black man to feel that he is on a lower level. When he is on that level he is “in his place.” When he is “in his place” he is liked. But he must not be allowed to do anything to make him forget that he is on this lower level; he must be kept “in his place,” which means the place which the aristocrat wants him to keep. You see, the black man carries the memory of slavery with him. Everybody knows that the slaves were the exploited working-class of the South. That put them in a class by themselves, down at the bottom, downtrodden, despised, “inferior.”

Do you begin to see now that Race Prejudice is only another name for Caste Prejudice? If our people had never been slaves; had never been exploited workers—and so, at the bottom of the ladder—there would be no prejudice against them now. In every case where there has been a downtrodden class of workers at the bottom, that class has been despised by the class that lived by their labor. Do you doubt it? Then look at the facts. If you had picked up a daily paper in New York in 1848 you would have found at the end of many an advertisement for butler, coachman,

lady's maid, clerk or book-keeper these words: "No Irish need apply." There was a race-prejudice against the Irish then, because most of the manual unskilled laborers were Irish. They were at the bottom, exploited and despised. But they have changed things since. Beginning in the seventies [1870s] when Jewish laborers began to come here from Russia, Austria and Germany, and lasting even to our own day, there has been race-prejudice against the Jews. And today when the Italian has taken the place which the Irish laborer vacated—at the bottom—he, too, comes in for his share of this prejudice. In every one of these cases it was the condition of the people—at the bottom as despised, exploited, wage-slaves—that was responsible for the race-prejudice. And it is just so in the black man's case, with this difference: that his color marks what he once was, and even though he should wear a dress suit every evening and own an automobile or a farm he can always be picked out and reminded.

Now, under the present system, exploiting the wage-slave is respectable. I have already shown you that wherever the worker is exploited he is despised. So you will see that despising the wage-slave is quite fashionable. You may recall the name of the great capitalist who said, "the public be damned." He was only a little more outspoken than the rest of his class. As long as the present system continues, the workers will be despised; as long as the workers are despised, the black men will be despised, robbed and murdered, because they are least able to defend themselves. Now ask yourself whether you haven't a very special interest in changing the present system.

Of course, you will ask: "But haven't white working people race-prejudice too?" Sure, they have. Do you know why? It pays the capitalist to keep the workers divided. So he creates and keeps alive these prejudices. He gets them to believe that their interests are different. Then he uses one half of them to club the other half with. In Russia when the workingmen demand reform, the capitalists sic them on the Jews. In America they sic them on the Negroes. That makes them forget their own condition: as long as they can be made to look down upon another class. "But, then," you will say, "the average wage-slave must be a chump." Sure, he is. That's what the capitalist counts on. And Socialism is working to educate the workers to see this and to unite them in doing away with the present system.

Socialism stands for the emancipation of the wage-slaves. Are you a wage-slave? Do you want to be emancipated? Then join hands with the Socialists. Hear what they have to say. Read some of their literature. Get a Socialist leaflet, a pamphlet, or, better still, a book. You will be convinced of two things: that Socialism is right, and that it is inevitable. It is right because any order of things in which those who work have least while those who work them have most, is wrong. It is inevitable because a system under which the wealth produced by the labor of human hands amounts to more than two hundred and twenty billions a year while many millions live on the verge of starvation, is bound to break down. Therefore, if you wish to join with the other class-conscious, intelligent wage-earners—in putting an end to such a system; if you want to better living conditions for black men as well as for white men; to make this woeful world of ours a little better for your children and your children's children, study Socialism—and think and work your way out.

Twelve years ago Mark Hanna, the Big Boss of the Republican Party, made a statement which you would do well to consider. After he had made McKinley president, he noticed something that you may not have noticed yourself. He saw that there was no essential difference between the Republican party and the Democratic party. He knew that the same big Wall Street companies supplied the campaign funds for each of them. He knew that the same money power was buying out the men whom you elected, whether you elected Republicans or Democrats. He saw that very soon you and I and the rest of us, black as well as white, would come to see it too. And he opened his mouth and spake these words: "The next great political battle in this country will be fought,

not between the Republican and the Democratic parties, but between the Republican party and Socialism." I will tell you later what that implies. But just now, what I should like you to see is this: that Senator Hanna realized that Socialism was a serious issue. He couldn't afford to pooh-pooh it. Neither can any sensible person. The Socialist party is the third in point of numbers. It is important. What do you know of this party? Have you ever read its platform? Read it once, just for the sake of fair play—just to show that you are not afraid to give it a hearing—and you will realize why Mark Hanna paid it such a tribute of respect.

Don't be a baby any longer and listen to the stale lies which other people tell you about Socialism. Read the Socialist platform and you will understand why some politicians have to tell lies about it just the same as they have to tell lies about you. They lie about it because they don't want you to know what it really is, just as they lie about you because they don't want people to know what you really are. Every year they feed you with the same soft mush around election time to help them to ride into power on your votes; then after election they give you Brownsville and lynching bees. Do you wonder that General Clarkson, a grandson of the great abolitionist, when he gave up his job as collector of the Port of New York, said that he was sick of the way in which the Republican party was selling you out? The Republican party is always engaged in selling you out—or in selling out the working people of this country. Do you doubt it? Then ask yourselves why is it that a Republican Congress has never said a word or done anything about the disfranchisement of nearly three million Negro voters in the South? Read the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and you will see that the Republican party has always had the power to stop it. But just now I want to get you interested in the one party that strikes at the very root of your trouble and that of every workingman in the country—white and black alike. I want you to see what is the attitude of the Socialist Party toward the American Negro. [...]

2.3 The African Blood Brotherhood, Program of the African Blood Brotherhood (1922)

A race without a program is like a ship at sea without a rudder. It is absolutely at the mercy of the elements. It is buffeted hither and thither and in a storm is bound to flounder. It is in such a plight as this that the Negro race has drifted for the past fifty years and more. Rarely ever did it know exactly what it was seeking and never once did it formulate any intelligent and workable plan of getting what it was seeking, even in the rare instances when it did know what it wanted. It is to meet this unfortunate condition and to supply a rudder for the Negro ship of State—a definite directive force—that the following program adopted by the African Blood Brotherhood is herewith offered for the consideration of other Negro organizations and of the race in general.

There is nothing illusory or impractical about this program. Every point is based upon the historic experience of some section or other of the great human family. Those who formulated the program recognized (1) the economic nature of the struggle (not wholly economic but nearly so); (2) that it is essential to know from whom our oppression comes: that is, who are our enemies; (3) that it is not necessary for Negroes to be able to endorse the program of these other movements before they can make common cause with them against the common enemy; that the important thing about Soviet Russia, for example, is not the merits or demerits of the Soviet form of Government, but the outstanding fact that Soviet Russia is opposing the imperialist robbers who have partitioned our motherland and subjugated our kindred, and that Soviet Russia is feared by those imperialist nations and by all the capitalist plunder-bunds of the earth, from whose covetousness and murderous

inhumanity we at present suffer in many lands.

Africa

Our Motherland, Africa, is divided by the Big Capitalist Powers into so-called “colonies.”

The colonies in turn are parcelled out to white planters and capitalists, some of them colonists, others absentee landlords. To this end the free life of the African peoples have been broken up and the natives deprived of their lands in order to force them to work, at starvation wages, on the lands of these white capitalists. These planter-capitalists have settled down in our country to exploit the riches of the land as well as the labor of our people.

But our people were not tamely submissive and had to be subjugated. They refused to be exploited and rebelled and fought the invader in an unequal struggle. The invaders, armed with weapons of modern technique, and precision, as against the primitive and old weapons of our forefathers, were finally able to subdue our people. But not until many a “British square” had been broken and many a sudden disaster suffered by the forces of all the invading capitalist powers.

How We Were Enslaved

And the fight was not yet over. A people living in oppression may be compared to a volcano. At any moment it may rise like a giant and run its enemies into the sea. To prevent this eventuality the capitalist planters, with the aid of their home governments, have organized “Colonial Armies,” formed and equipped according to the methods of modern technique. And to conquer our militant spirit and win us to slavish acceptance of their dominance they brought in the white man’s religion, Christianity, and with it whiskey. By the white man’s religion our people’s militant spirit was drugged; with his whiskey they were debauched. The white man’s treachery, the white man’s religion and whiskey had as great a part in bringing about our enslavement as the white man’s guns.

But in order to more intensively exploit our rich motherland and the cheap labor power of an enslaved people, it was necessary to bring into our land certain machine industries and certain material improvements, like railroads, etc., and today we may witness, especially in the coast cities of Africa, the steady growth of modern enterprise. With the introduction of industrial equipment the African has learned to wield the white man’s machines, his guns, his methods, and with the possession of this knowledge has grown a new hope and determination to achieve his freedom and become the master of his own motherland.

Hope Never More Justified

Indeed, the hope of the Negro people to free themselves from the imperialist enslavers was never more justified than at present. The home governments of the planter-capitalists are weakening day to day, and are trembling under the menace of the Proletarian Revolution. The oppressed colonies and small nations are in constant rebellion, as witness the Irish, Turks, Persians, Indians, Arabs, Egyptians, etc.

While the interior of Africa is as yet barely touched by predatory Capitalism, the tribes fully realize the danger they would be subjected to should the enslavers penetrate more into the interior. Under the leadership of the more able and developed Negroes in the coast district, the tremendous power of the Negro race in Africa could be organized. Towards this end we propose that every effort shall be bent to organize the Negroes of the coast districts, and bring all Negro organizations in each of the African countries into a worldwide Negro Federation. The various sections of the Federation

to have their own Executive Committees, etc., and to get in touch with the tribes in the interior, with a view of common action. The Supreme Executive Committee to get in touch with all other peoples on the African continent, the Arabs, Egyptians, etc., as well as the revolutionists of Europe and America, for the purpose of effecting coordination and action.

Labor organizations should be formed in the industrial sections in order to protect and improve the conditions of the Negro workers.

No opportunity should be lost for propagandizing the native soldiers in the “colonial armies” and for organizing secretly a great Pan-African army in the same way as the Sinn Fein built up the Irish Army under the very nose of England.

Modern arms must be smuggled into Africa. Men sent into Africa in the guise of missionaries, etc., to establish relations with the Senussi, the various tribes of the interior, and to study the topography of the country. The Senussi already have an “army in existence,” a fact that is keeping European capitalist statesmen awake o’ nights.

Every effort and every dollar should be spent to effect the organization of a Pan-African army, whose very existence would drive respect and terror into the hearts of the white capitalist-planters, and protect our people against their abuses. Remember: MIGHT MAKES RIGHT—ALWAYS DID AND ALWAYS WILL.

America

Whatever interest the capitalist displayed in the Negro was always [motivated] by considerations of cheap labor power.

It was early recognized that the Negro people were the most [enduring] in the world, and when the New World was discovered the rich exploiters organized expeditions to enslave our people and forcibly carry them into New World lands, there to build empires and create wealth where otherwise none would have been possible. This is the history of most Negro populations in foreign lands.

The Cause of the Civil War

In the United States, as is well known, the Negroes but a few decades ago were exploited according to the most crude and primitive system of exploitation: chattel slavery. This chattel slavery prevailed in the South, while in the North the modern capitalist method of exploitation (wage slavery) prevailed. The two systems could not exist side by side and therefore the so-called war of liberation, in which Northern Capitalists and their retinue, in a smoke of idealistic camouflage, went to war against feudal capitalists in the South in order to decide supremacy between the two systems in the Americas. Northern Capitalists won and chattel slavery in the South was abolished with lurid speeches and glamor about Liberty, Democracy, etc.

But the Negroes were not to have even the comparative liberty which the great Capitalist Czars tolerate under the wage-slavery system. They were scrupulously disarmed, while their former owners with their henchmen remained armed. To repress all Negro aspirations for real freedom and suppress all desires to better their condition, secret murder societies like the Ku Klux Klan were organized by the former owner class, who tortured and murdered secretly in cold blood thousands of defenseless Negroes and many whites, whenever the humanitarian instincts prompted them to champion the Negroes’ cause. And the victorious Capitalist “Liberators” of the North not only did not move a finger to enforce justice but suppressed the facts of this terrible persecution of the Negro and his few white friends. Through years of terror exercised by these white cracker societies the Negro again became totally subjugated, and peonage is the lot of many today in the Southern States, while

many are lynched or massacred every year. Lately the New Negro has come upon the scene and in response to his rebellious spirit and that of the exploited in general, we see the resurrection of the Ku Klux Klan.

Negro Migration

As a result of continued oppression and maltreatment in the South, many thousands of Negroes have managed to escape to the North, and today every big Northern city has a large Negro population.

The comparative freedom of the North is propitious for great organizations and cultural activities, and it is here that the vanguard and general staff of the Negro race must be developed.

A Great Negro Federation

In order to build a strong and effective Movement on the platform of Liberation for the Negro People and protection of their rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," etc., all Negro organizations should get together on a Federation basis, thus creating a united centralized movement. Such a movement could be carried on openly in the North, but would have to be built up secretly in the South in order to protect those members living in the South and to safeguard the organization from premature attack. Within this Federation a secret protective organization should be developed—the real Power—to the membership of which should be admitted only the best and most courageous of the race. The Protective organization would have to function under strict military discipline, ready to act at a moment's notice whenever defense and protection are necessary.

Labor and Economic Organizations

Millions of Negroes have come North and are employed as laborers and mechanics, etc., in the various industries and capitalist enterprises of the North. Being unorganized, they are compelled to work at the meanest jobs and under the worst conditions. When depression in industry appears they are the first to suffer. The white workers, through their labor organizations, have not only compelled the capitalists to give them more money and a shorter workday, but also partial employment during slack times. And when better times arrive, the white workers, through their organization, are ready to take full advantage of the situation. Negro workers, whenever organized in Labor Unions, have improved their living conditions, won shorter hours, more money, and steadier employment, as witness the sleeping car conditions, the Negro Longshoremen of Philadelphia, etc. And since the strength of a people depends upon the degree of well-living by that people, we must by all means strive to substantially improve the standard of living, etc. All worthwhile Negro organizations and all New Negroes must therefore interest themselves in the organizing of Negro workers into Labor Unions for the betterment of their economic condition and to act in close cooperation with the class-conscious white workers for the benefit of both.

Negro Farmer Organization

The same principle applies to the small Negro farmers and farm laborers. They must get together to resist exploitation as well as to protect themselves against peonage and other injustices.

Whenever cooperation with white farmers is possible it is of course desirable.

Cooperative Organizations

There has developed among our people the naive belief that permanent employment, better conditions, and our salvation as a race can be accomplished through the medium of Negro factories, steamship lines, and similar enterprises. We wish to war against putting too great dependence along this line, as sudden financial collapse of such enterprises may break the whole morale of the Liberation Movement. Until the Negro controls the rich natural resources of some country of his own he cannot hope to compete in industry with the great financial magnates of the capitalist nations on a scale large enough to supply jobs for any number of Negro workers, on substantial dividends for Negro investors. Let those who have invested in such propositions tell you whether they have obtained either jobs or dividends by such investment.

The only effective way to secure better conditions and steady employment in America is to organize the Negro's labor power as indicated before into labor organizations. Every big organization develops certain property in the shape of buildings, vacation farms, etc. In prosperous times they may even develop cooperative enterprises such as stores, etc., but such enterprises must be cooperative property of all members of the organization, and administered by members elected for the purpose. Under no circumstances should such property be operated under corporation titles written over to a few individuals to be disposed of at their pleasure. But experience has proven that such enterprises can only exist when the oppressed class is well organized. Without adequate organization an industrial crisis like the present would sweep them off their feet. But where backed by adequate organization the cooperative idea can be worked to advantage. Unlike the corporation, which lifts a few men on the shoulders and life-savings of the many, the cooperative is of equal benefit to all.

Alliances

There can be only one sort of alliance with other people and that is an alliance to fight our enemies, in which case our allies must have the same purpose as we have. Our allies may be actual or potential, just as our enemies may be actual or potential. The small oppressed nations who are struggling against the capitalist exploiters and oppressors must be considered as actual allies. The class-conscious white workers who have spoken out in favor of African liberation and have a willingness to back with action their expressed sentiments, must also be considered as actual allies and their friendship further cultivated. The non-class conscious white workers who have not yet realized that all workers regardless of race or color have a common interest, must be considered as only potential allies at present and everything possible done to awaken their class-consciousness toward the end of obtaining their cooperation in our struggle. The revolutionary element which is undermining the imperialist powers that oppress us must be given every encouragement by Negroes who really seek liberation. This element is led and represented by the Third International which has sections in all countries. We should immediately establish contact with the Third International and its millions of followers in all countries of the world. To pledge loyalty to the flags of our murderers and oppressors, to speak about alliances with the servants and representatives of our enemies, to prate about first hearing our proven enemies before endorsing our proven friends is nothing less than cowardice and the blackest treason to the Negro race and our sacred cause of liberation.

It is the Negroes resident in America—whether native or foreign born—who are destined to assume the leadership of our people in a powerful world movement for Negro liberation. The American Negro, by virtue of being a part of the population of a great empire, has acquired certain knowledge in the waging of modern warfare, the operation of industries, etc. This country is the

base for easy contact with the whole world, and the United States is destined, until the Negro race is liberated, to become the center of the Negro World Movement. It is in this country, especially, that the Negro must be strong. It is from here that most of the leaders and pioneers who will carry the message across the world will go forth. But our strength cannot be organized by vain indulgence in mock-heroics, empty phrases, unearned decorations and titles, and other tomfoolery. It can only be done by the use of proper tactics, by determination and sacrifice upon the part of our leaders and by intelligent preparatory organization and education.

To be kidded along with the idea that because a few hundreds of us assemble once in a while in a convention that therefore we are free to legislate for ourselves; to fall for the bunk that before having made any serious effort to free our country, before having crossed swords on the field of battle with the oppressors, we can have a government of our own, with presidents, potentates, royalties, and other queer mixtures; to speak about wasting our energies and money in propositions like Bureaus of Passports and Identification, diplomatic representatives, etc., is to indulge in pure moonshine, and supply free amusement for our enemies. Surely, intelligent, grown-up individuals will not stand for such childish nonsense if at all they are serious about fighting for Negro liberation! We must come down to earth, to actual practical facts and realities, and build our strength upon solid foundations—and not upon titled and decorated tomfoolery.

2.4 Claude McKay, *Report on the Negro Question* (1922)

Comrades, I feel that I would rather face a lynching stake in civilized America than try to make a speech before the most intellectual and critical audience in the world. I belong to a race of creators but my public speaking has been so bad that I have been told by my own people that I should never try to make speeches, but stick to writing, and laughing. However, when I heard the Negro question was going to be brought up on the floor of the Congress, I felt it would be an eternal shame if I did not say something on behalf of the members of my race. Especially would I be a disgrace to the American Negroes because, since I published a notorious poem in 1919 ["If We Must Die"], I have been pushed forward as one of the spokesmen of Negro radicalism in America to the detriment of my poetical temperament. I feel that my race is honored by this invitation to one of its members to speak at this Fourth Congress of the Third International. My race on this occasion is honored, not because it is different from the white race and the yellow race, but [because it] is especially a race of toilers, hewers of wood and drawers of water, that belongs to the most oppressed, exploited, and suppressed section of the working class of the world. The Third International stands for the emancipation of all the workers of the world, regardless of race or color, and this stand of the Third International is not merely on paper like the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America. It is a real thing.

The Negro race in the economic life of the world today occupies a very peculiar position. In every country where the Whites and Blacks must work together the capitalists have set the one against the other. It would seem at the present day that the international bourgeoisie would use the Negro race as their trump card in their fight against the world revolution. Great Britain has her Negro regiments in the colonies and she has demonstrated what she can do with her Negro soldiers by the use that she made of them during the late War. The revolution in England is very far away because of the highly organized exploitation of the subject peoples of the British Empire. In Europe, we find that France had a Negro army of over 300,000 and that to carry out their policy of imperial domination in Europe the French are going to use their Negro minions.

In America we have the same situation. The Northern bourgeoisie knows how well the Negro

soldiers fought for their own emancipation, although illiterate and untrained, during the Civil War. They also remember how well the Negro soldiers fought in the Spanish-American War under Theodore Roosevelt. They know that in the last war [World War I] over 400,000 Negroes who were mobilized gave a very good account of themselves, and that, besides fighting for the capitalists, they also put up a very good fight for themselves on returning to America when they fought the white mobs in Chicago, St. Louis and Washington.

But more than the fact that the American capitalists are using Negro soldiers in their fight against the interests of labor is the fact that the American capitalists are setting out to mobilize the entire black race of America for the purpose of fighting organized labor. The situation in America today is terrible and fraught with grave dangers. It is much uglier and more terrible than was the condition of the peasants and Jews of Russia under the Tsar. It is so ugly and terrible that very few people in America are willing to face it. The reformist bourgeoisie have been carrying on the battle against discrimination and racial prejudice in America. The Socialists and Communists have fought very shy of it because there is a great element of prejudice among the Socialists and Communists of America. They are not willing to face the Negro question. In associating with the comrades of America I have found demonstrations of prejudice on the various occasions when the White and Black comrades had to get together: and this is the greatest difficulty that the Communists of America have got to overcome—the fact that they first have got to emancipate themselves from the ideas they entertain towards the Negroes before they can be able to reach the Negroes with any kind of radical propaganda. However, regarding the Negroes themselves, I feel that as the subject races of other nations have come to Moscow to learn how to fight against their exploiters, the Negroes will also come to Moscow. In 1918 when the Third International published its Manifesto and included the part referring to the exploited colonies, there were several groups of Negro radicals in America that sent this propaganda out among their people. When in 1920 the American government started to investigate and to suppress radical propaganda among the Negroes, the small radical groups in America retaliated by publishing the fact that the Socialists stood for the emancipation of the Negroes, and that reformist America could do nothing for them. Then, I think, for the first time in American history, the American Negroes found that Karl Marx had been interested in their emancipation and had fought valiantly for it. I shall just read this extract that was taken from Karl Marx's writing at the time of the Civil War:

When an oligarchy of 300,000 slave holders for the first time in the annals of the world, dared to inscribe 'Slavery' on the banner of armed revolt, on the very spot where hardly a century ago, the idea of one great democratic republic had first sprung up, whence the first declaration of the Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the eighteenth-century, when on that spot the counter-revolution cynically proclaimed property in man to be 'the cornerstone of the new edifice'—then the working class of Europe understood at once that the slaveholders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy war of property against labor, and that (its) hopes of the future, even its past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic.

Karl Marx who drafted the above resolution is generally known as the father of Scientific Socialism and also of the epoch-making volume popularly known as the socialist bible, *Capital*. During the Civil War he was correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. In the company of Richard Cobden, Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist, and John Bright, he toured England making speeches and so roused up the sentiment of the workers of that country against the Confederacy that Lord Palmerston,

[the] Prime Minister, who was about to recognize the South, had to desist.

As Marx fought against chattel slavery in 1861, so are present-day socialists, his intellectual descendants, fighting wage slavery.

If the Workers Party in America were really a Workers Party that included Negroes it would, for instance, in the South, have to be illegal, and I would inform the American Comrades that there is a branch of the Workers Party in the South, in Richmond, Virginia, that is illegal—illegal because it includes colored members. There we have a very small group of white and colored comrades working together, and the fact that they have laws in Virginia and most of the Southern states discriminating against whites and blacks assembling together means that the Workers Party in the South must be illegal. To get round these laws of Virginia, the comrades have to meet separately, according to color, and about once a month they assemble behind closed doors.

This is just an indication of the work that will have to be done in the South. The work among the Negroes of the South will have to be carried on by some legal propaganda organized in the North, because we find at the present time in America that the situation in the Southern States (where nine million out of ten million of the Negro population live), is that even the liberal bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie among the Negroes cannot get their own papers of a reformist propaganda type into the South on account of the laws that there discriminate against them. The fact is that it is really only in the Southern States that there is any real suppression of opinion. No suppression of opinion exists in the Northern states in the way it exists in the South. In the Northern states special laws are made for special occasions as those against Communists and Socialists during the War—but in the South we find laws that have existed for fifty years, under which the Negroes cannot meet to talk about their grievances. The white people who are interested in their cause cannot go and speak to them. If we send white comrades into the South they are generally ordered out by the Southern oligarchy and if they do not leave they are generally whipped, tarred and feathered; and if we send black comrades into the South they generally won't be able to get out again—they will be lynched and burned at the stake.

I hope that as a symbol that the Negroes of the world will not be used by the international bourgeoisie in the final conflicts against the World Revolution, that as a challenge to the international bourgeoisie, who have an understanding of the Negro question, we shall soon see a few Negro soldiers in the finest, bravest, and cleanest fighting forces in the world—the Red Army and Navy of Russia—fighting not only for their own emancipation, but also for the emancipation of all the working class of the whole world.

2.5 W.E.B. Du Bois, Application for Membership in the Communist Party (1961)

On this first day of October 1961, I am applying for admission to membership in the Communist Party of the United States. I have been long and slow in coming to this conclusion, but at last my mind is settled.

In college I heard the name of Karl Marx, but read none of his works, nor heard them explained. At the University of Berlin, I heard much of those thinkers who had definitely answered the theories of Marx, but again we did not study what Marx himself had said. Nevertheless, I attended meetings of the Socialist Party and considered myself a Socialist.

On my return to America, I taught and studied for sixteen years. I explored the theory of socialism and studied the organized social life of American Negroes; but still I neither read nor heard

much of Marxism. Then I came to New York as an official of the new NAACP and editor of *The Crisis* magazine. The NAACP was capitalist-oriented and expected support from rich philanthropists.

But it had a strong socialist element in its leadership in persons like Mary Ovington, William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell. Following their advice, I joined the Socialist Party in 1911. I knew nothing of practical socialist politics and in the campaign on 1912 I found myself unwilling to vote for the Socialist ticket, but advised Negroes to vote for Wilson. This was contrary to Socialist Party rules and consequently I resigned from the Socialist Party.

For the next twenty years I tried to develop a political way of life for myself and my people. I attacked the Democrats and Republicans for monopoly and disenfranchisement of Negroes; I attacked the Socialists for trying to segregate Southern Negro members; I praised the racial attitudes of the Communists, but opposed their tactics in the case of the Scottsboro Boys and their advocacy of a Negro state. At the same time, I began to study Karl Marx and the Communists; I read *Das Kapital* and other Communist literature; I hailed the Russian Revolution of 1917, but was puzzled by the contradictory news from Russia.

Finally in 1926, I began a new effort; I visited the Communist lands. I went to the Soviet Union in 1926, 1936, 1949 and 1959; I saw the nation develop. I visited East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. I spent ten weeks in China, traveling all over the land. Then this summer, I rested a month in Rumania.

I was early convinced that socialism was an excellent way of life, but I thought it might be reached by various methods. For Russia, I was convinced she had chosen the only way open to her at the time. I saw Scandinavia choosing a different method, halfway between socialism and capitalism. In the United States, I saw Consumers Cooperation as a path from capitalism to socialism, while in England, France and Germany developed in the same direction in their own way. After the Depression and the Second World War, I was disillusioned. The progressive movement in the United States failed. The Cold War started. Capitalism called communism a crime.

Today I have reached my conclusion: Capitalism cannot reform itself; it is doomed to self-destruction. No universal selfishness can bring social good to all.

Communism—the effort to give all men what they need and to ask of each the best they can contribute—this is the only way of human life. It is a difficult and hard end to reach, it has and will make mistakes, but today it marches triumphantly on in education and science, in home and food, with increased freedom of thought and deliverance from dogma. In the end communism will triumph. I want to help bring that day.

The path of the American Communist Party is clear: It will provide the United States with a real third party and thus restore democracy to this land. It will call for:

1. Public ownership of natural resources and of all capital.
2. Public control of transportation and communications.
3. Abolition of poverty and limitation of personal income.
4. No exploitation of labor.
5. Social medicine, with hospitalization and care for the old.
6. Free education for all.
7. Training for jobs and jobs for all.
8. Discipline for growth and reform.
9. Freedom under law.
10. No dogmatic religion.

These aims are not crimes. They are practiced increasingly over the world. No nation can call itself free which does not allow its citizens to work for these ends.

Week 3

The Black Belt

The Black Belt thesis is a theory popularized by the Communist Party that maintains Blacks in America constitute a separate nation, geographically located in the American South, with a right to self-determination. The theory is inspired by Joseph Stalin's four-point definition of a nation outlined in his *Marxism and the National Question*.

Although the Black Belt thesis was adopted as the Communist Party's official line on the "Negro Question" at the Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928, most Communists—both Black and white—opposed the policy prior to its ratification. Nevertheless, the Comintern passed a resolution endorsing it over the Americans' wishes. Harry Haywood, a Black American Communist, was one of the few Americans who supported the Black Belt policy's acceptance. He would remain an advocate of the theory throughout his life.

Although it was accepted as official policy, The Black Belt line was largely downplayed by American Communists in their political work. The CPUSA's adoption of the thesis coincided with the start of more serious American Communist work for Black liberation; the party was in the forefront of the struggle for Black rights during the Great Depression. Haywood had to wait until after the Comintern's Third Period (1928–1935), Popular Front era (1935–1939) and World War II—during all of which the program was unemphasized for various reasons—to publish a book discussing the idea. The singer Paul Robeson provided some of the funds allowing Haywood to complete the resultant work, *Negro Liberation*, a chapter of which appears below.

3.1 Harry Haywood, The Negro Nation (1948)

In the struggle against the plantation system of the South, the Negro people are necessarily the chief driving force. The liberal "remedies" which shy away from the fundamental economic changes indispensable for the democratic transformation of the South, ignore this crucial fact and, with it, they ignore the special character of the social and political struggle of the Negroes.

The Myth of Race

The "white supremacists" insist on presenting the Negro question as one of race. This makes it possible for them to "justify" the notorious color-caste system in the name of spurious race dogmas which depict the Negroes servile status in American life, not as the result of man-imposed

prescription, but as a condition fixed by nature. Negro inequality is supposedly due to natural inherent differences. In this credo, Negroes presumably are a lower form of organism, mentally primitive and emotionally undeveloped. "Keeping the Negro in his place" is thus allegedly prescribed by nature and fixed by Holy Writ. Color of skin is made an index to social position. Race, a strictly limited biological concept, becomes a social factor and used as an instrument for perpetuating and intensifying Negro subjugation. The Negro problem is explained in terms of natural conflict between races, the result of inborn peculiarities.

This hideous distortion, whose roots go back into ante-bellum times and beyond, permeates the entire cultural pattern of the South; this vile calumny is fixed in the South's folkways, mores and customs, sanctioned in its laws, and, in the last analysis buttressed by violence and lynch terror.

The lie of natural, innate and eternal backwardness of the Negro and other dark-skinned peoples is the theoretical foundation upon which rests the whole noxious system of Negro segregation and its corollary, "white supremacy."

Formerly a rationalization of chattel slavery, it is used to justify the Negroes present-day vassalage. Held down by an all-pervasive and absolute system of Jim Crow based on color of skin and curl of hair whose myriad taboos found him from the cradle to the grave the Negro is Americas "untouchable."

Buell G. Gallagher observes in *Color and Conscience*:

Slavery as ownership of chattel is gone: as a caste system it remains. Its purpose is to keep non-whites in a position that, in one way or another, is inferior or subordinate to that of whites. Its devices range from lynching and mob violence, at one extreme, through legal enactment and extra-legal manipulations of courts and police, to custom and etiquette as instruments of caste control.

From its taproot in the semi-feudal plantation system, anti-Negro racism has spread throughout the country, shaping the pattern of Negro-white relationships in the North as well. With the clandestine encouragement of Yankee financial power and its controlled agencies of public opinion, art, literature, education, press, and radio, the dogma of the Negroes "inherent inferiority" has been cunningly infiltrated into the national consciousness of the American people. Woven into the national fabric, it has become an integral part of the "American way of life," despite repeated refutation by authoritative science.

In reality, the so-called racial persecution of the Negro in the United States is a particular form and device of national oppression. The use by an oppressor nations ruling class of such social differences as language and religion to preserve the isolation (and thus the economic and social inequality) of a subject people is common knowledge.

Negro Liberation

Everywhere in the world, a study of the national question reveals the use of these differences by the ruling bourgeoisie as the foundation for its strategy of "divide and rule," of fomenting strife and friction between the toilers of various nationalities. In Hitler's Germany with its slogan of "one race, one culture, one nation," racism reached a high peak making the cult of race the cornerstone of state and world policy. Bloody pogroms, artificially created almost overnight against Jews, became the openly declared official program of Nazi rule.

In America, the roots of racism are deeper, sunk as they are in the unsolved land question of the Black Belt. The current upswing of racism in the United States is utilized by monopoly capital in

the drive toward fascism and its by-product, war. In the United States, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, a far-flung system of racial persecution, springing from the mire of chattel slavery with strong survivals up to the present day provides an even more fertile soil than Hitler had.

Racism, always the game of a reactionary governing class, is being played for much higher stakes today.

Among American Negroes, physical difference becomes almost the sole characteristic whereby the subject race can be distinguished from the oppressor nation. In the absence of such socio-cultural distinctions between white and Negro as language and religion, the "racial visibility" of the Negro enables the Anglo-Saxon ruling clique to set him apart from all others among the population as a permanent object of scorn and oppression.

Effect on the Negro

In the ideology of race, the dominant classes have a much more potent weapon at their disposal than even religion and language. The latter, as social phenomena, are historically transient; whereas race, a physical category, persists. And once a people has been smeared with the stigma of "racial inferiority" they are ipso facto ruled out as unworthy of nationhood and its inherent right of self-government, a right which in itself is presumed to be the special privilege of "superior" races.

This deliberately cultivated emphasis on the racial factor, particularly on the aspect of color differences, has not been without its adverse effect upon the Negro. It has indeed acted as a retardation on the growth of political self-assertion. The fog of racist obscurantism, thrown up by his oppressors, has made difficult clear political orientation, i.e., the job of locating and thus confronting the real enemy the forces of monopoly capitalism. It is therefore not surprising that until quite recently Negro protest has been shunted off into the blind alley of a defensive "racialism." What is in reality an aspiration for identity as a nation has sought expression through false symbols of "race" foisted on him by white rulers. He has perforce defined his fight for freedom as a fight for "racial equality," "racial opportunity."

Manifestly, the Negro problem cannot be defined by any racial formulae. Ideologically, they obscure the economic and political conditions for the achievement of Negro equality, and impede the full and necessary clarity as to the nature of the issue. They are tank-traps to block the road to the understanding of the profound revolutionary implications of the struggle of the Negro people for liberation.

The maintenance of the pariah status of Negro Americans, their lack of equality, is an integral part of the policy of American finance capital. That policy has for its objective the achievement of the following:

1. The artificial and forcible stifling of the free economic and cultural development of the Negro through racist persecution as a basic condition for maintaining his super-exploitation and for maintaining the degradation of the great mass of southern white folks;
2. The infection of the organism of American democracy with the virus of race hatred as a deterrent to the formation of a common front of labor and democratic people against the common enemy monopoly capitalism.

The fulcrum of that policy is the retention by monopoly of the slave survivals in the Black Belt as an essential economic and social base for its allies the decadent. Bourbon squirearchy of the South. And now, this policy has led to the conversion of the entire South into a bulwark behind which the most noxious forms of native fascism are rallying for a full-scale sortie against the democracy of the whole country and the world.

Real Nature of the Problem

The secret to unraveling the tangled skein of America's Negro question lies in its consideration as the issue of an oppressed nation. Within the borders of the United States, and under the jurisdiction of a single central government, there exist not one, but two nations: a dominant white nation, with its Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, and a subject black one.

Unlike the white immigrant minorities, the Negro, wearing his badge of color, which sets the seal of permanency on his inferior status, cannot, under contemporary economic and social conditions, be absorbed into the American community as a full-fledged citizen, limited as this absorption is in practice even for large sections of the white minorities. He cannot hope to escape as long as the status quo remains unchanged in the South. True, there are colored minorities, such as the colored Latin Americans Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and others; there are Orientals, and remnants of the American Indians. But these also are tarred with the brush of color and are in the main relegated to the category of "unassimilables," outside the limits of majority democratic tradition.

But the classification of the Negro as a "minority" leaves unanswered the question posed long ago by George W. Cable, a foremost champion of Negro rights: why one-tenth of the population, all natives of the United States, and by law an inseparable part of the nation, do not have the same full measure of citizenship that they would have were they entirely of European rather than of partially African descent. For really, as Cable put it, the Negro remains in America a "perpetual alien."

The policy of Jim-Crow proscription of America's black folk has resulted over the years in the shaping of the Negro as a distinct economic, historical, cultural, and, in the South, geographical entity in American life. The Negro is American. He is the product of every social and economic struggle that has made America. But the Negro is a special kind of American, to the extent that his oppression has set him apart from the dominant white nation. Under the pressure of these circumstances, he has generated all the objective attributes of nationhood.

The history of the Negro people in the United States is unquestionably intertwined with the history of the rest of the American people. But to say no more than this would be to falsify both the special story of the Negro people and to befog the history of American capitalism. For, on the one hand there were the dominant whites, and among them existed from the beginning the division into economic classes. The Negroes, on the other hand, were forced into the stream of American history in a special manner as oppressed slaves whose present position as a whole people still bears the marks of the slave lash.

The Negro was not freed by the Revolution of 1776, nor was he fully freed by the Second American Revolution of 1861-77 the Civil War and Reconstruction. The fact is that the first American republic contained a glaring flaw the institution of chattel slavery. This despite the aims so proudly proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence of man's inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Excluded from these "inalienable rights" was an important segment of the American people the Negro slave who, at the time, comprised one-fifth of the country's population.

Thus, the new American national state created as a result of revolution got off to a false start. This "omission" was to prove almost fatal. The glaring ambiguity of a nation half free and half slave was recognized by the most advanced statesmen of the period, by Paine, Jefferson, Franklin, Samuel Adams, and others.

It was the belief of the Founding Fathers that slavery would soon die out. Slavery was not particularly profitable, except in a very few areas. The tide of history turned with the industrial revolution in England and the various inventions, topped by the cotton gin, which created a world-

wide demand for cotton. In 1789, when the Constitution was adopted, no one doubted that there would soon be an end of slavery. By 1818, when the debate began on the admission of Missouri, a new slavocracy had arisen which was demanding expansion into new lands.

The compromises which the Constitution contained on the issue of slavery precluded the participation of the Negro in the first American republic. It prevented his democratic integration into the new national state. He was thus cheated of the fruits of the victory to which he had contributed in terms of 5,000 of his people in the revolutionary armed forces.

But the constitutional compromises only postponed the issue of slavery. This issue was to flare up anew in the second decade of the nineteenth century and was to occupy the spotlight in American politics up to the end of the Civil War.

The question of slavery, as Marx observed, was for half a century the moving power of American history. The issue was finally resolved only by the Second American Revolution—the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Here again, for the second time, hope was held for the full integration of the Negro into American life as a free and equal citizen, for the consolidation of Americans, black and white, into one nation. But again the revolution was aborted, again the Negro was left outside the portals of full citizenship. The great betrayal of 1877, sealed by the Hayes-Tilden gentlemen's agreement, turned over the management of the South to the new Bourbon classes, who were given the chance to reconstruct that region "in their own way."

Again the Negro was denied the fruits of the victory, which he had helped to win. Deserted by his erstwhile allies, he was left landless and at the tender mercy of the former slaveholders. Again, as in the Revolution of 1776, he was placed at the doorstep of full freedom only to have the door slammed in his face an unwelcome intruder. This second great defeat blasted his hopes for democratic absorption into American national life.

But a qualitative change had taken place in his status. Freed from chattel slavery by the uncompleted revolution, he was now ready for the appearance of economic classes within his group, which under the conditions of segregation and imperialist oppression, necessarily served as driving forces for a movement of national liberation. The process of class stratification among Negroes was of necessity a slow and tortuous one, taking place as it did against the overwhelming odds of post-Reconstruction reaction. But proceed it did, so that the Negroes, who at the time of their release from chattel bondage comprised an almost undifferentiated peasant mass, had by the beginning of the twentieth century become transformed into a people manifesting among themselves the class groupings peculiar to modern capitalist society. Along with an increasing mass of wage laborers, there began to appear a class of small business people, with more or less well-defined capitalist aspirations. This class was to find its spokesmen among the educated middle class. The rise of a Negro bourgeoisie marked the appearance of a class which, striving to defend its own interests under American conditions, was destined to initiate an historical movement, which could only develop in the direction of national freedom. The process of class differentiation developing against the background of Jim-Crow oppression, and in conditions of continued majority concentration of Negroes in the Black Belt, thus formed the main objective conditions for their emergence as an oppressed nation.

The advent of imperialism, the epoch of the trusts and monopolies, at the turn of the century, riveted the yoke of white ruling-class tyranny still tighter, with the result that the Negro was thrust still further out of the pale of American democracy into deeper isolation within his own group. The rise of a finance-capitalist oligarchy to dominant position in American economic and political life precluded the possibility of peaceful democratic fusion of the Negro into a single American nation

along with whites. Thenceforth the issue of Negro equality could be solved only via the path of the Negro's full development as a nation. The Negro question had now definitely become the problem of an oppressed nation striving for national freedom against the main enemy, imperialism.

Objective Conditions for Nationhood

Geographically, the Negroes are scattered throughout the United States, but almost one-third of their number (five million) are still massed in the Black Belt area, including its peripheral counties. Despite the migrations of the last eighty years, they exist as a stable community and form a majority of the population over a broad area.

We defined the Black Belt in Chapter I as an area girding the heart of the South, encompassing its central cotton-growing states and 180 counties in which the Negroes constitute more than half (50 to 85.5 per cent) of the population. From this core, the Black Belt Negro community overflows into 290 or more neighboring counties, whose populations are from 30 to 50 per cent Negro. In the whole of this area, then, in a total of approximately 470 counties, live five million Negroes.

This Black Belt region is the heartland of the American Negro. Here he has lived from generation to generation. It was upon its Atlantic Seaboard that his forefathers landed in Jamestown, Virginia, over 800 years ago. As a chattel slave, the black man followed the trek of King Cotton and the plantation across the face of the South. He planted and raised the South's chief cash crops, tobacco and cotton. His unrequited labor as a slave formed an essential part of the primary accumulation of wealth upon which the towering edifice of American industrial civilization was founded. Yet, eighty-five years after "emancipation" he is still denied his share. He remains a disinherited pauper, a social leper in his own homeland, groaning under the burden of absentee rulers and their regional henchmen, forced to obey laws which he has had no part in making.

Any serious examination will show that the Negro population of the Black Belt is tied together by myriad internal bonds, by all facets and agencies of modern capitalism, has all the prerequisites for existence as a nation. In the Black Belt, there is a division of labor between city and country typical of our capitalist era. Though it is primarily an agricultural community, this area has its cities, serving as commercial and industrial outlets for the agrarian hinterland, cities such as New Orleans, Savannah, Mobile, Memphis, Charleston, Atlanta, Norfolk, Winston-Salem, all lying within the Black Belt or at its periphery. These cities are economically and historically part of that region. This is so notwithstanding the fact that Negroes comprise roughly only thirty to forty per cent of the populations of these centers.

As elsewhere in the modern world, town and country are linked by a unified system of transportation and communication, by monetary unity, by a common banking and credit structure, by all media essential to modern capitalist market relationships.

Among the Negro people of the area, there exist all class groupings peculiar to capitalism, which historically provided the basis for the emergence of modern nations. Not only do Negroes work as laborers in the cotton and tobacco fields; they work also in the coal mines, steel mills, saw and planing mills, ginning and cotton seed oil mills, in furniture, turpentine refining, in processing of tobacco, in chemical industries and in pulp and paper, in longshore and logging, on railroads, etc.

There is a Negro upper class or bourgeoisie, living in both urban and rural communities, striving as do all bourgeois classes for the extension of its markets. Its most influential segment resides in the cities, functioning mainly in the fields of insurance, small-scale banking, real estate, undertaking and other services for the Negro community. There is also a sprinkling of well-to-do Negro farm owners in the rural areas. This Negro bourgeoisie has its ideologists in the educated middle classes,

striving for the modern development of their people. There is the thin stratum of professional people, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, ministers (the largest group), and social workers. The development of all these classes is artificially retarded by American monopoly capitalism and its Bourbon cohorts. All classes suffer from the ferocious national oppression. The people as a whole find their interests running counter to this stifling Jim Crow. The Negro workers want modern conditions of labor; the sharecroppers, poor farmers, and plantation hands want land and freedom from the yoke of peonage; the town middle classes and intellectuals want equal opportunities in businesses and professions.

Although the Negro community in this area has all these economic and social elements of capitalism welding it together, we must not lose sight of the decisive fact, that the region's economy remains backward, mainly agrarian in character. The full development of modern capitalism has been arbitrarily arrested. In this respect the region's economy is typical of that of colonial and other retarded nations. One can say that the Black Belt is a kind of "internal colony" of American imperialism, made to function mainly as the raw material appendage of the latter. The character of the oppression of the Negro people in no sense differs from that of colonial peoples. The economy of the region is not controlled by the Negro capitalists. Its immediate direction is in the hands of white local capitalists and landlords, who act as the outpost command for the real rulers, the financial dynasty of Wall Street.

This only emphasizes the fact that the economy of the Black Belt is typical of that of an oppressed nation, whose full development is artificially and forcibly retarded by imperialism.

Negro Culture

A common tradition and culture, native to Negro America, has been in the making since the first Negroes were landed at Jamestown. The special history of the Negro people in the United States is the history of oppression and the struggle against it. It is the history of the misery of the chattel slave sold from the holds of the slaveships into bondage where an unknown tongue prevailed. It is the history of more than two hundred heroic slave revolts and insurrectionary plots, all of them foredoomed and ruthlessly suppressed. The history of the Negro people has infused the Negro with hopes, ideals, customs, and traits which are blended in a psychology whose activities and aims move in a thousand ways toward freedom and equality. This psychology has been evidenced in slave revolts, in participation in the democratic wars of this country and in its political life, especially during Reconstruction, and in the various organizations that developed the liberation movement of modern times.

The entire development of Negro music, literature, poetry, and painting, of churches, fraternal groups, and social societies, bears the imprint of this struggle for liberation. The psychological as well as the economic need for continuous struggle to gain equal democratic status, to throw off the oppressive chains and assume the upright posture of a free people this is and has been the dynamic of Negro culture.

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois pointed out this fact in his introduction to the appeal to the United Nations, submitted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in February 1947:

The so-called American Negro group, therefore, while it is in no sense absolutely set off physically from its fellow Americans, has nevertheless a strong, hereditary cultural unity, born of slavery, of common suffering, prolonged proscription and curtailment of political and civil rights; and especially because of economic and social disabilities. Largely from

this fact have arisen their cultural gifts to America their rhythm, music and folk-song; their religious faith and customs; their contributions to American art and literature; their defense of their country in every war, on land, sea and in the air; and especially the hard, continuous toil upon which the prosperity and wealth of this continent has largely been built.

The Negro people are a separate folk, a people with distinct interests, feelings and attitudes built upon their common history of suffering and oppression.

The result... has been to make American Negroes to a wide extent provincial, introverted, self-conscious and narrowly race-loyal; but it has also inspired them to frantic and often successful effort to achieve, to deserve, to show the world their capacity to share modern civilization. As a result there is almost no area of American civilization in which the Negro has not made creditable showing in the face of all his handicaps.

Notwithstanding its many points of contact with the culture of the dominant white nation, this Negro culture has its own distinctive features. Thus there has arisen within the Negro community a socio-cultural structure corresponding to the status of fixed inequality forced upon him by the dominant white nation. There is among the Negro community a multiplicity of organizations, national and local, devoted to every field of human interest and endeavor: to education, to civil rights, to the special interest of various professional groups and of women, youth, veterans, and business enterprises. There is a Negro church which in many parts of the country is a social rallying point of the Negro community.

The authors Drake and Cayton, describing Bronzeville, Chicago's Negro community, observed that:

The people of Bronzeville have, through the years, crystallized certain distinctive patterns of thought and behavior. While Bronzeville's institutions differ little in form from those in other Midwest Metropolis communities, they differ considerably in content. The dissimilarity springs primarily from two facts: Because the community is spiritually isolated from the larger world, the development of its families, churches, schools and voluntary associations has proceeded quite differently from the course taken by analogous white institutions; and, second, Bronzeville's 'culture is but a part of a larger, national Negro culture, its people being tied to thirteen million other Negroes by innumerable bonds of kinship, associational and church membership, and a common minority status. The customs inherited by Bronzeville have been slowly growing up among American Negroes in the eighty years since slavery.

The cultural pattern of Chicago's Bronzeville has its replica in Harlem, in Detroit's "Paradise Valley," in the Pittsburgh Hill section, in Los Angeles' Central Avenue, indeed in every Black ghetto in America, the greatest of which is the Black Belt itself. National Negro culture finds expression in a rich folklore, in music, in the dance, in an expanding and virile theatre movement and in a highly developed literature. It is voiced in a rapidly growing press. (In 1946 the combined circulation for 137 Negro newspapers was almost two millions.) But, through whatever medium it manifests itself, this culture is built around themes of distinctly Negro life and Negro problems.

Coming from the heart of the masses of people welded together by like yearnings, stirred by the same causes, this culture expresses the deep-felt aspirations of the Negro people, their strivings to break through the walls of the Jim-Crow ghetto and to achieve recognized status as a free people.

The present great Negro political awakening is finding expression in a new resurgence of Negro literature and art. Langston Hughes, outstanding Negro folk poet, has hailed this new cultural "renaissance" as transcending in depth and scope the vast wave of Negro cultural activity following World War I, which found in Alain Locke its foremost interpreter.

To the glory of poetry, it may be said that in literature Negro poets raised most clearly and feelingly the ringing tones of struggle for liberation. Standing highest among these bell-like singers are such contemporary poets as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Sterling Brown. Among the younger poets are Owen Dodson, Gwendolyn Brooks and Margaret Walker. The interpretative writings of Alain Locke, the novels of Arna Bontemps, Richard Wright, Ann Petry, the poetry of James Weldon Johnson, the biographical work of Shirley Graham, the plays of Theodore Ward, the dramatic interpretations of Canada Lee, have enhanced the treasury of American and world literature and art. The great people's artist and leader, Paul Robeson, is a towering example of the magnificent contributions of the Negro people in the world of music and drama. William Grant Still, outstanding contemporary Negro composer; Marian Anderson, world famous contralto; Richard Barthe, foremost Negro sculptor; Ernest Crichlow, prominent illustrator and caricaturist, and Hale Woodruff, prize-winning muralist, are only a few of the many creative Negro talents in these fields. In the roster of creative writers who have dealt and deal now with Negro life are names of Negroes who vie for top honors with all other writers in the United States.

To the literary expressions of a resurgent Negro people must be added the increasing numbers of works by Negro scholars and scientists who represent, on the whole, a deeper probing of the problem. Outstanding among these are the works of that sterling Negro scholar and fighter, W.E.B. Du Bois, and of the eminent historian Carter Woodson. The late George Washington Carver, one of the world's great scientists, is an example of their outstanding achievements in the sciences.

Progressive scholars have done yeoman work in unearthing the Negro's pre-American past, in piecing together that broken line of Negro history and the contribution the black man has made throughout time and throughout the world. They have refuted the spurious race stereotypes depicting the Negro as a man without a past, without a history, and, therefore, unworthy of an equal place at the table of civilization.

The myth of the Negro's past as only a "drawer of water and a hewer of wood" is now exploded. And in the shattering of this myth, the Negro has seen himself emerge as the inheritor of a rich historical tradition with antecedents reaching back into the dawn of civilization itself. This literature has brought to the consciousness of Negro America and to an ever-growing segment of whites the missing pages of American and African history, the great contribution made by the Negro to civilization-and democracy.

The trends which Alain Locke noted in the 'twenties have become more fully matured. What he said then can more emphatically be stated today:

The day of 'Aunties,' 'Uncles' and 'Mammies' is gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on, and even the 'Colonel' and 'George' play barnstorm roles from which they escape with relief when the public spotlight is off. The popular melodrama has about played itself out and it is time to scrap the fictions, garret the bogeys and settle down to a realistic facing of facts.

The New Negro is here and in much greater numbers than he was in the 'twenties. The stereotypes are giving way to a Negro with a new sense of his own dignity and worth and a newly awakened pride in himself as a contributor in no mean sense to the progress of our society. He is a Negro determined to fight for his just rights.

And behind this new Negro is the emerging dynamic force of the Negro industrial working class, which is playing an increasingly important role in the councils of Negro leadership.

Of course, this picture of Negro culture is not complete. There are also negative, non-progressive features, expressing the trend of self-isolation, Negro particularism. That the culture of the Negro people is expressed through the medium of the English language is no argument against the apparent fact that theirs is a distinctly Negro culture. English is the language of the Negro American as it is the language of all Americans. All American Negroes speak English. It is their common medium of expression. A common language, not necessarily a separate or distinct language, is the requirement of nationhood. In England, the United States, Canada, Australia, English is the native language. Yet no one will seriously argue that they are not separate nations.

For, with their past behind them, and in the course of their three hundreds years' sojourn on the American continent, the Negroes have adopted the English language as their own in the same manner that they have adopted other institutions of the dominant American nation. They have become transformed from the enslaved descendants of various African tribes and nations, having different levels of economic and social development, speaking different dialects and languages, into an ethnically homogeneous and tightly welded people. They are today a people strengthened and hardened by oppression and rapidly gaining maturity.

Joseph Stalin, who was chiefly responsible for formulating the successful program for solving the problem of Russia's many nations, has defined a nation as an "historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." The validity of this definition has been attested by the fact that it has served as the theoretical cornerstone for the building of that unique fraternity of free and equal nations known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Negroes in the United States manifest all these attributes of nationhood listed in the concise and classic definition of Stalin. They are "a nation within a nation."

The Status of National Consciousness

True, the actual movement for national liberation among the Negro people in the U. S. has been comparatively weak. It has even been argued that the Negro himself rejects the concept of separate nationality as a classification of his status in the contemporary American social scene. For, the argument runs, if the Negroes were a nation, would not the asseveration of their nationality find definite expression in the demands, slogans, and programs of their organizations? Since, allegedly, the capitalistic upper classes are the bearers of the "national idea," is not the fact that this class among Negroes has never, in a clear-cut and consistent manner, raised the demands of nationhood, conclusive proof that the Negroes are not a nation?

The fact is that the Negroes are a young nation whose advance to political consciousness and strength is retarded by imperialistic oppression. Yet, this very oppression is creating the basis for the rise of a fully conscious national movement among them. The weak development of national consciousness, or the lack of it, is characteristic of young nations. For example, in our own hemisphere fully a score of new nations have come into existence within the last one hundred and fifty years. The acquisition of national consciousness was in most cases a slow and arduous process. It is a fact that some of these nations, particularly in Central America, have yet to develop a vigorous sense of nationhood, and have by no means won full independence.

The anti-imperialistic revolution in India has thrust forward on the political arena of that vast sub-continent a score of distinct and hitherto submerged peoples, energetically demanding a place in the sun their recognition as nations within the frame of a free India. Outstanding is the case of the Moslems, who, until quite recently, recognized themselves as a religious entity, with

only communal and religious differences separating them from the main mass of Hindu peoples. Despite the reactionary distortion of the legitimate Moslem national aspirations contained in the Mountbatten Award, which established two states, Pakistan and Hindustan, on the basis of religious difference only, the movement of the Moslem peoples for the right of national self-determination now occupies a central sector on the front of Indian freedom.

The road to national consciousness of the American Negro is more arduous and tortuous than that of most peoples. It is beset by formidable obstacles both of an ideological and a physical environmental nature.

First, there is the overwhelming and stifling factor of race, the chief weapon in the ideological arsenal of the ruling classes of the oppressor nation. The spurious dogma of Negro racial inferiority is sunk deep in the thinking of white America. It has left its indelible stamp on the nascent Negro nation, befogging the basic concept of the Negroes' status as that of an oppressed nation. The charge leveled against the Negro people, that they are less than human, has forced them into an untenable defensive position, in which much of their energy has been consumed in the assertion of their basic humanity, their right to be considered human beings. To meet this invidious attack they have perforce rallied under the slogans of racial equality, racial solidarity, slogans which, though militant, do not hit the center of the target their oppression as a nation in the Black Belt.

Secondly, an additional deterrent to the Negroes' quest for freedom, via nationhood, is that the concept of Negro nationality is a totally new one, and thus outside the bounds of the traditional thinking of American democrats. Thus the idea of Negro nationhood, on American soil, when first projected by the Communist Party, met with attack not only by reactionaries, but also by well-meaning liberals, including many Negro leaders, who felt it to be a retreat before Jim Crow, an acquiescence to segregation.

Finally, perhaps the most formidable retarding factor in the development of the Negro's consciousness of nationhood is the fact that the new Negro nation of the Black Belt finds itself set down in the midst of the strongest capitalist nation in the world, totally engulfed by what the Negro playwright, Theodore Ward called "The Big White Fog."

Furthermore, as Stalin has pointed out, the national question nowadays is "virtually a peasant question." However, in this struggle against financial exploitation, political enslavement, and cultural effacement of the Negro people by the imperialist bourgeoisie, the mass of the Negro peasantry have lacked the leadership from those classes on which the development of the national movement has historically depended. The Negro bourgeoisie and industrial proletariat are comparatively recent social formations.

For the Negro to claim the rights of nationhood in these conditions would be an act of the highest political consciousness. And yet the fact is that, while eager to combat every manifestation of Jim Crow within American life, the Negro people see the solution of their problems neither in a process of ethnological absorption into the white community, nor in the abandonment of their American homeland for some illusory refuge in Africa or a "49th State," nor in any escapist scheme of mass exodus from the South. On the contrary, they have continued to build their own organizations and agencies affecting every phase of Negro endeavor in the United States, systematically throwing off the feeling and even the terminology of "racial" inferiority; and strengthening the wellsprings of national consciousness. The Negro masses want equality, and increasingly feel that they can and must achieve it as a people in their own right. The emergence of new mass forces and influences, spearheaded by a rapidly maturing Negro industrial working class, has proved decisive in this development.

This growing sense of nationhood has been most dramatically expressed in the appeals of the

National Negro Congress and of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to the United Nations. Du Bois, in his introduction to the N.A.A.C.P. appeal, writes:

The United Nations surely will not forget that the population of this group [the Negroes] makes it in size one of the considerable nations of the world. We number as many as the inhabitants of the Argentine or Czechoslovakia, or the whole of Scandinavia including Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. We are very nearly the size of Egypt, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. We are larger than Canada, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Hungary, or the Netherlands. We have twice as many persons as Australia or Switzerland, and more than the whole Union of South Africa. We have more people than Portugal or Peru; twice as many as Greece and nearly as many as Turkey. We have more people by far than Belgium and half as many as Spain. In sheer numbers then we are a group which has a right to be heard; and while we rejoice that other smaller nations can stand and make their wants known in the United Nations, we maintain equally that our voice should not be suppressed or ignored.

Despite the weak growth of national consciousness among Negroes, the road ahead for the Negro people in the United States points to the further, accelerated development of national aspirations. The experiences of World War II, in which the Negro people made great sacrifices in the common struggle against fascist aggression, only provided new evidence that the Negro was suffering from a distinct form of national oppression. The post-war period multiplied the evidence a thousand-fold. Instead of being followed by an unprecedented extension and revitalization of democracy in the United States, the triumph over the fascist powers was followed by a post-war offensive of reaction which, in addition to its assault upon the democratic rights of the labor and progressive movements generally, also set itself the task of "putting the Negro back in his place." Even if the Negro people had chosen to integrate themselves with the nation as a whole, the forces of reaction, spurred on by the program of monopoly capital, put up new barriers to such integration and left no doubt that freedom for the Negro people could only be won by even greater struggles against national oppression, and first of all for land and political power in the Black Belt.

Right of Self-Determination

In fact, it is here that the national character of the struggle is most pronounced. The battle for fundamental agrarian reform is inextricably interwoven with the fight against the most barbarous type of fascist racist oppression of the Negro majority. Here it is not simply a matter of landlordism, but a particular brand of landlordism, that of a white ruling clique. In collusion with urban capitalists of the region, and with the clandestine backing of northern reactionaries, this landlordism maintains through the instruments of "white supremacy" (courts, police, militia and extra-legal auxiliaries of the K.K.K. and other such terroristic bodies) a system of special persecution and plunder of the Negro people, rivaled only in the most backward colonial lands. It is a landlordism that glories in the open flouting of the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution.

This persecution of the Negro in the Southland, as we have indicated, is actually an auxiliary of national oppression of the most voracious kind, equivalent to foreign rule. It is designed for the political suffocation and suppression of a people who comprise the majority of the population of a contiguous land area, a people of common ethnic origin, and with a common history.

Any program envisioning fundamental reorganization of the South's agrarian structure and land relationships must take into full account this "racial" or national factor, which is integrally tied in

with the agrarian problem. Such a program must project as its long-range objective the breaking of the class domination of the Wall-Street-backed Bourbon oligarchy and the white supremacy color-caste system by which this rule of arbitrary violence over the Negro people is legally and morally sanctioned.

Democracy in the Black Belt

This means that the corrupt rule of monopoly capitalism and its allies in the Black Belt must be supplanted by the democratic rule of the majority, that is, of the Negro people, with the full participation of their allies among the disfranchised white minority. Without governmental and administrative control in the hands of the most oppressed section of the people, fundamental agrarian reform is impossible, as has been universally proved. Only government institutions that represent and express the special interests of the preponderant Negro population, and enjoy its confidence, can effect a radical change in the structure of southern landownership, so urgently needed by the bulk of the Black Belt's people and southern whites generally.

The question of self-government for the Negroes in the South, however, is inseparable from their character as a nation.

In the last analysis the fight for self-government in the Black Belt is the fight for the right of self-determination by the Negro nation.

What, concretely, is the meaning of the right of self-determination of nations? What should be understood by it? Is it to be identified with separation? As regards the Negroes, is it to be equated to the demand for a separate Negro state in the Black Belt a Negro republic? Does it run counter to the principle of Negro and white unity, so essential to the struggle for Negro rights and democracy? Is it not a capitulation to Jim Crow or segregation, as many of the critics of this principle contend?

These are some of the questions raised, not only by reactionaries who have donned the false cloak of friendship for the Negro's cause in order better to sabotage it, but by many honest and sincere proponents of Negro freedom.

The right of self-determination means none of these things. Quite the contrary. It implies the application of consistent democracy in the sphere of relations between nations, the elimination of the forcibly imposed distinction between oppressed and oppressing nations; it means the abolition of all and sundry privileges of one nation over the other. Specifically it means simply the right of the people of a nation to determine their own fate, or destiny, free from forcible intervention from without by the people of another nation. A nation has the right to organize its own life in the manner or form it chooses, independent of the dictates of any other nation to be master in its own house. Finally, self-determination means the recognition of the sovereignty of a people in all matters affecting their internal life as well as in matters involving their relationships with other peoples or nations. This, then, is the content and principle of the right of self-determination.

Quite definitely, this right includes the right of separation, that is, the right to free political secession from the oppressing nation. But self-determination must not be construed as identical with secession and the establishment of an independent state. The right of nations to secede is an inviolable democratic right, but it is not an obligation, or a duty.

"A nation," says Stalin,

has the right to arrange its life on autonomous lines. It even has the right to secede. But this does not mean that it should do so under all circumstances, that autonomy, or separation, will everywhere and always be advantageous for a nation, for the majority of its population, for the toiling strata.

An illustrative parallel which might serve to bring out the distinction between right and obligation is afforded in the field of woman's rights. The right of divorce is universally recognized in all advanced nations as basic to the emancipation of womanhood. Every democrat worthy of the name is duty-bound to support this right. But the right of divorce by no means signifies an obligation on the part of women to divorce their husbands. And so it is with nations. Any attempt to reduce the right of self-determination to the demand for secession is in fact to deny this right. It would be equivalent to dictating the form in which the nation should apply its rights.

A study of the national question reveals that the choice of settlement of the problem may be exercised in any one of the following forms, depending on the decision of the nation itself:

A nation may decide upon complete secession, that is, to set itself up as an independent state, or again it may decide on federation with the former oppressing nation, or it may decide upon territorial autonomy within the borders of the former oppressing state, with a varying degree of sovereignty over its own internal affairs, viz., some form of local or regional self-government. There are, of course, varying degrees of autonomy within a state of mixed national composition, depending primarily upon the degree of unification of the respective autonomous people as a modern nation. Federation implies voluntary association between free and equal nations in the form of a federative state. All these forms of the exercise of the right of self-determination have found a living and truly creative expression in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which assures the economic and cultural development of all of its peoples.

International experience in the solution of the nationality problem has shown clearly that any program for its solution must include two points. First, it must confirm the unconditional right of the nation to democratic self-determination up to the point of secession and the organization of a separate state. Secondly, it must include a point on territorial autonomy in the event that the nation should decide on this alternative and consider it to be the most advantageous for its people.

"We demand the freedom of self-determination," Lenin said,

not because we dream of an economically atomized world, nor because we cherish the ideal of small states, but on the contrary, because we are for large states and for a coming closer, even a fusion of nations, but on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is unthinkable without the freedom of separation.

The recognition of the principle of self-determination implies an uncompromising fight for the conditions for its realization; that means, the fight for equality in all fields, and against all forms of national or racial oppression, in short, complete democracy in the country. The exercise of the right of self-determination is the crowning point of this struggle and symbolizes that the equality of the given nation has been fully achieved.

Self-determination is, therefore, "merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form." It is an irrefutable demand of consistent democracy in the sphere of the national problem.

Self-determination as the ultimate solution of the Negro national question is no communist dogma, as the spokesmen of imperialism both open and covert strive so desperately to prove. Neither is it a mere theory. Quite the opposite. It is a living reality attested by the struggles of the oppressed nations everywhere, and confirmed beyond all dispute in the epic example of the Soviet Union, a country embracing one-sixth of the earth's land surface, in which the national question has

been solved. Upon the ruins of the “prison of nations” that had been the Russia of the tsars, where the most rapacious and wildest forms of national and racial oppression prevailed, has now been built that great commonwealth of free and equal nations known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Here 189 peoples speaking 150 languages, different in tradition, race and color, enjoy the same rights and are forged together in an extraordinary unity of effort and enthusiasm for a common ideal a multicolored, multi-national fraternity of peoples, a commonwealth of nations based on the free association of races and nations living in peace and friendly collaboration. This democratic solution of the national question, grounded in a socialist economy, is the reason for the unshakable unity displayed by the Soviet peoples in the recent war against fascism. Undeniably the Soviet achievement is a crowning victory for the policy that recognizes the unqualified right of nations to self-determination.

The policy of self-determination as the solution of the national question has found its confirmation most recently in the policies of the new people’s democracies which have arisen in post-war Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, states which prior to World War II had been torn by national strife and dissension, have now been transformed into democratic multi-national states based on equality and the right of self-determination of formerly oppressed nations such as the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, and the Slovenes, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians, and the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The principle of self-determination applies fully to the situation of the Negro nation of the Black Belt. Once the Negro community there is conceded to be a nation, the recognition of its right to self-determination logically and inalterably follows.

It would be scraping the very bottom of the foul pit of distortion and calumny to label this democratic need of the Negro people of the Black Belt a concession to Jim Crow, or to assert that it plays into the hands of the Bilbos and Talmadges. Jim Crow means separation of Negro and white, a separation arbitrarily and violently imposed by the Negro’s oppressors.

It is the instrument of imperialist national oppression. But the right of self-determination for the Black Belt Negro, on the contrary, commits its proponents to the most consistent and unremitting fight for every democratic need of the Negro people; it means the obligation to assist in the organization of and to give practical support to their fight against all forms of Jim-Crow oppression and violence to the point of the establishment of their full equality; that is, the realization of the concrete conditions in which the right of self-determination of the Negro nation can be exercised.

In America the imperialist policy of Jim-Crow national oppression of the Negro creates the conditions for the rise of a movement for Negro national liberation. At the same time, imperialist oppression clears the ground for the emergence of the most dynamic force of that movement, the Negro working class, drawing it into the orbit of industry and into direct contact and fraternal relationships with white labor.

This is a glaring paradox in the world of imperialism; but for advanced labor whose perspective is socialism these trends are but part of a single process leading to world unity on a free and voluntary basis.

Self-Government

While the right and exercise of self-determination is the inherent goal of the Negro struggle for national liberation in the Black Belt, self-rule in the partial form of local self-government within the existing federal state is a first and mandatory step in its attainment. It is the minimum requirement for the recasting of the South’s agricultural set-up along democratic lines, to guarantee to the

Negroes the necessary political power for beginning the wide sweeping economic and cultural reforms needed in that region.

The precedent for Negro self-government was set historically in the period of Radical Reconstruction, when the newly emancipated Negro, in alliance with southern poor whites and supported by northern democracy, stepped forward to take his place in government, and to establish in the South the only democratic regime it has ever known the Reconstruction governments of 1867–77. During this period, Negro self-government actually existed in a number of Black Belt counties. Its rudimentary forms were likewise observed in the Constitutional Conventions held in ten southern states and by the dominant Negro representation in the subsequent state legislatures of South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana.

In South Carolina, Negroes composed the great majority in the Lower House of the three legislatures which sat between 1868 and 1873, and a very large minority of the Lower Houses which sat between 1874 and 1878. Representation in the state legislatures of other states was considerably less.

Negroes occupied offices other than in legislatures in the following states: South Carolina—Lieutenant Governor (twice); Speaker of the House (twice); Secretary of State, Adjutant and Inspector-General; Louisiana—Acting Governor (in interim of 43 days, this was Lieutenant Governor P. B. S. Pinchback); Lieutenant Governor (three times); Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Superintendent of Public Education; Mississippi—Secretary of State, Lieutenant Governor, Superintendent of Education. Other offices were held by Negroes in other states.

From 1868 to 1901, there were a total of 23 Negroes in Congress, two of whom were Senators. Many of these served in more than one session of Congress. Some were reelected several times.

To the chagrin of its defamers, this “experiment in Negro government” resulted in the framing of the most democratic state constitutions in the nation. For example, the South Carolina convention put through a constitution which included immediate abolition of property qualifications for office holding; universal suffrage for Negro and white; no discrimination against Negroes; proportional representation according to population and not on a property basis; no imprisonment for debt; compulsory universal education; recognition of woman’s rights; and reorganization of state and county governments to provide for the fullest participation of the people.

The falsification of the true history of Reconstruction, the concealing of its real lessons from the people has, over the years, become a built-in part of the whole system of “white supremacy,” by which the Bourbon oligarchs justify their absolutist totalitarian rule.

Reconstruction is depicted as a period of unrestrained, violence, bloody terror, carnage, and rapine, in which the Negro is presented as a naive but semi-savage person who, freed from a benevolent slavery, roamed the land robbing and stealing, and venting his lust upon unprotected white womanhood; while in the background, directing this horror, stalked the most sinister of all figures, the vengeful, swaggering carpetbagger exacting his blood-drenched pound of flesh from a ruined and prostrate South.

A whole literature has been built upon such vicious distortions. Particularly in the South, among poor whites, has this lying version been accepted as irrefutable fact; the carpet-bag bogey and its corollary, the threat of “Black Domination,” has been used by generations of Dixie demagogues not only to frighten little children but a whole white population.

The Negro-white unity achieved during the Reconstruction “experiment in Negro government,” held forth the promise of a rapid development of the South out of its morass of reaction and backwardness. It was crushed, however, by the victory of the counter-revolution of 1877, sealed in the Hayes-Tilden agreement between northern capitalism and southern reaction.

In the context of the present fight against encroaching fascism for a truly democratic people's government for the United States as a whole, the need of the Black Belt Negro for political self-rule means simply the establishment of the jurisdiction of the Negro majority over all questions purely of a local and regional character.

Its realization would of course involve the reorganization of the present governmental and administrative structure of a number of southern states whose boundaries now arbitrarily crisscross the area of contiguous Negro majority breaking up this area into a maze of governmental administrative, judicial, and electoral subdivisions, which in no way correspond to the life needs of its people.

Indeed, these divisions are purposely maintained in many cases are even gerrymandered by the South's rulers with the aim of continuing the political suppression of the region's predominant colored population. The abolition of these bureaucratic and arbitrarily established boundaries and their replacement by truly democratic ones, conforming not with the needs of the bourbon oppressors but with those of the oppressed, is a key task of American democracy.

Self-government for the Black Belt region implies just such a regrouping of county and administrative districts to guarantee full proportional representation for the Negro people in all areas of government. What honest democrat could deny to the Negro majority in the Deep South the self-government that the peoples of other states comprising our federal union now enjoy? For the Black Belt this demand would mean simply majority representation on the governing body or legislature of the region, the right of such a body to make laws in the interests of the majority, to levy taxes, to control the police and militia, jurisdiction over education and public facilities, etc. On whose interests would such rights encroach? Certainly not those of the disfranchised and pauperized white minority. Plain it is that only the Bourbon lynchocrats have cause to fear this legitimate aim of the Negro people democracy in the Southland. Let there be no mistake. The Talmadges, Rankins, and the rest of their unspeakable tribe clearly understand the real issues involved. And in that understanding lays the explanation for their frenzied beating of the drums of "race war," amidst demagogic cries of "Black Domination." Negro self-government is a simple democratic demand, in full conformity with the principles of majority rule.

Negro self-government, in this sense, is conceivable in the frame of our present federal system of government. Clearly, therefore, it can by no means be construed as separation. This demand has nothing in common with the fantastic and reactionary scheme proposed by the 49th State Movement which planned to herd Negroes into a segregated area, set aside especially for them by the federal government. Quite the reverse, Negro self-government for the Black Belt means representative government for the Negro in the area where he now resides and is largely concentrated. Its realization is a prerequisite for genuine democratic unity.

Its realization would lay the basis for the abolition of the odious white supremacy caste system, thus paving the way for a new democratic renaissance of the Negro people surpassing that of their aborted resurgence of post-Civil War times. It would make possible the unleashing of the full potential of creative energy and self-initiative of a people now smothered by Bourbon "race" strictures that are designed to hide the underlying social-class issues of the struggle for democracy in the South.

Self-government is therefore an irreducibly minimal demand of the Negro people of the Black Belt indispensable to their economic and cultural development.

This demand represents the basic interests of the impoverished white minority of the region whose backwardness and distress are anchored in the oppression of the Negro masses, since they can be freed only through uncompromising support for the full rights of the Negro people. Recognition

of the right of self-government for the Black Belt Negroes is, therefore, basic to any permanent alliance between them and the southern white working people against the common enemy.

That self-government is a major political goal towards which the Negroes' struggle for democracy in the Black Belt is heading should be apparent to any keen student of southern politics. This need, in its elementary form, is inherent in the widespread demand of Negroes in southern urban communities for the redistricting of political subdivisions in a manner to assure them representation in local politics. And, in its primary stages, the fight for Negro self-government is implicit in the growing demand for representative government in the region; that is, in the fight for electoral reforms, such as the right to vote, to hold office, to sit on juries and for protection against Ku Klux terrorism and lynching. The necessity for such Negro self-government is made patent by the South's bi-color caste system, which dictates permanent inequality for the Negro. The need for it, while not yet clearly expressed, is nevertheless innate in the objective conditions of Negro life in the Black Belt, and will undoubtedly be forced to the surface in the surging wave of unrest now engulfing the colored population of the Deep South.

Self-government is a slogan that epitomizes the immediate political demands of the Negroes in the South. It would give the entire movement around these urgent demands of Negro equality—demands being accepted by ever increasing numbers of democracy-loving Americans—their proper focus and import. It would raise the struggle to a higher level, pointing this struggle to its ultimate goal the achievement of fundamental agrarian reform and the full right of self-determination.

Week 4

Domestic Work

Claudia Jones was a Trinidadian who immigrated to the United States in 1924. Due to her respect for the Communists' legal defense of the Scottsboro Boys (nine young Black men falsely accused of raping white women in the South), Jones joined the Young Communist League (the youth wing of the American Communist Party) in 1936. She then rose in influence through the Communist Party, eventually occupying several important editorial positions, as well as organizing and speaking. Jones was arrested and deported in 1955 to the United Kingdom due to her Communist activities. She died in 1964; by her insistence she was buried next to Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery.

Her most famous piece, "An End To The Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!" appears below. The article appeared in the party journal *Political Affairs* and signaled the CPUSA's increasing attention to combatting the "triple oppression" that Black women face under capitalism. Prior to the Civil Rights era, the CPUSA was unique in tackling this issue.

4.1 Claudia Jones, An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman! (1949)

An outstanding feature of the present stage of the Negro liberation movement is the growth in the militant participation of Negro women in all aspects of the struggle for peace, civil rights, and economic security. Symptomatic of this new militancy is the fact that Negro women have become symbols of many present-day struggles of the Negro people. This growth of militancy among Negro women has profound meaning, both for the Negro liberation movement and for the emerging anti-fascist, anti-imperialist coalition.

To understand this militancy correctly, to deepen and extend the role of Negro women in the struggle for peace and for all interests of the working class and the Negro people, means primarily to overcome the gross neglect of the special problems of Negro women. This neglect has too long permeated the ranks of the labor movement generally, of Left-progressives, and also of the Communist Party. The most serious assessment of these shortcomings by progressives, especially by Marxist-Leninists, is vitally necessary if we are to help accelerate this development and integrate Negro women in the progressive and labor movement and in our own Party.

The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the Negro woman, and for good reason. The capitalists know, far better than many progressives seem to know, that once Negro women undertake

action, the militancy of the whole Negro people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced. Historically, the Negro woman has been the guardian, the protector, of the Negro family. From the days of the slave traders down to the present, the Negro woman has had the responsibility of caring for the needs of the family, of militantly shielding it from the blows of Jim-Crow insults, of rearing children in an atmosphere of lynch terror, segregation, and police brutality, and of fighting for an education for the children. The intensified oppression of the Negro people, which has been the hallmark of the postwar reactionary offensive, cannot therefore but lead to an acceleration of the militancy of the Negro woman. As mother, as Negro, and as worker, the Negro woman fights against the wiping out of the Negro family, against the Jim-Crow ghetto existence which destroys the health, morale, and very life of millions of her sisters, brothers, and children.

Viewed in this light, it is not accidental that the American bourgeoisie has intensified its oppression, not only of the Negro people in general, but of Negro women in particular. Nothing so exposes the drive to fascization in the nation as the callous attitude which the bourgeoisie displays and cultivates toward Negro women. The vaunted boast of the ideologists of Big Business—that American women possess “the greatest equality” in the world is exposed in all its hypocrisy when one sees that in many parts of the world, particularly in the Soviet Union, the New Democracies and the formerly oppressed land of China, women are attaining new heights of equality. But above all else, Wall Street’s boast stops at the water’s edge where Negro and working-class women are concerned. Not equality, but degradation and super-exploitation: this is the actual lot of Negro women!

Consider the hypocrisy of the Truman Administration, which boasts about “exporting democracy throughout the world” while the state of Georgia keeps a widowed Negro mother of twelve children under lock and key. Her crime? She defended her life and dignity-aided by her two sons—from the attacks of a “white supremacist.” Or ponder the mute silence with which the Department of Justice has greeted Mrs. Amy Mallard, widowed Negro school-teacher, since her husband was lynched in Georgia because he had bought a new Cadillac and became, in the opinion of the “white supremacists,” “too uppity.” Contrast this with the crocodile tears shed by the U.S. delegation to the United Nations for Cardinal Mindszenty, who collaborated with the enemies of the Hungarian People’s Republic and sought to hinder the forward march to fuller democracy by the formerly oppressed workers and peasants of Hungary. Only recently, President Truman spoke solicitously in a Mother’s Day Proclamation about the manifestation of “our love and reverence” for all mothers of the land. The so-called “love and reverence” for the mothers of the land by no means includes Negro mothers who, like Rosa Lee Ingram, Amy Mallard, the wives and mothers of the Trenton Six, or the other countless victims, dare to fight back against lynch law and “white supremacy” violence.

Economic Hardships

Very much to the contrary, Negro women-as workers, as Negroes, and as women-are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population.

In 1940, two out of every five Negro women, in contrast to two out of every eight white women, worked for a living. By virtue of their majority status among the Negro people, Negro women not only constitute the largest percentage of women heads of families, but are the main breadwinners of the Negro family. The large proportion of Negro women in the labor market is primarily a result of the low-scale earnings of Negro men. This disproportion also has its roots in the treatment and position of Negro women over the centuries.

Following emancipation, and persisting to the present day, a large percentage of Negro women—married as well as single—were forced to work for a living. But despite the shift in employment of Negro women from rural to urban areas, Negro women are still generally confined to the lowest-paying jobs. The Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, *Handbook of Facts for Women Workers* (1948, Bulletin 225), shows white women workers as having median earnings more than twice as high as those of non-white women, and non-white women workers (mainly Negro women) as earning less than \$500 a year! In the rural South, the earnings of women are even less. In three large Northern industrial communities, the median income of white families (\$1,720) is almost 60 percent higher than that of Negro families (\$1,095). The super-exploitation of the Negro woman worker is thus revealed not only in that she receives, as woman, less than equal pay for equal work with men, but in that the majority of Negro women get less than half the pay of white women. Little wonder, then, that in Negro communities the conditions of ghetto-living—low salaries, high rents, high prices, etc.—virtually become an iron curtain hemming in the lives of Negro children and undermining their health and spirit! Little wonder that the maternity death rate for Negro women is triple that of white women! Little wonder that one out of every ten Negro children born in the United States does not grow to manhood or womanhood!

The low scale of earnings of the Negro woman is directly related to her almost complete exclusion from virtually all fields of work except the most menial and underpaid, namely, domestic service. Revealing are the following data given in the report of 1945, *Negro Women War Workers* (Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, Bulletin 205): Of a total $7\frac{1}{2}$ million Negro women, over a million are in domestic and personal service. The overwhelming bulk—about 918,000—of these women workers are employed in private families, and some 98,000 are employed as cooks, waitresses, and in like services in other than private homes. The remaining 60,000 workers in service trades are in miscellaneous personal service occupations (beauticians, boarding house and lodging-house keepers, charwomen, janitors, practical nurses, housekeepers, hostesses, and elevator operators).

The next largest number of Negro women workers are engaged in agricultural work. In 1940, about 245,000 were agricultural workers. Of them, some 128,000 were unpaid family workers.

Industrial and other workers numbered more than 96,000 of the Negro women reported. Thirty-six thousand of these women were in manufacturing, the chief groups being 11,300 in apparel and other fabricated textile products, 11,000 in tobacco manufactures, and 5,600 in food and related products.

Clerical and kindred workers in general numbered only 13,000. There were only 8,300 Negro women workers in civil service.

The rest of the Negro women who work for a living were distributed along the following lines: teachers, 50,000; nurses and student nurses, 6,700; social and welfare workers, 1,700; dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians, 120; physicians and surgeons, 129; actresses, 200; authors, editors, and reporters, 100; lawyers and judges, 39; librarians, 400; and other categories likewise illustrating the large-scale exclusion of Negro women from the professions.

During the anti-Axis war, Negro women for the first time in history had an opportunity to utilize their skills and talents in occupations other than domestic and personal service. They became trail blazers in many fields. Since the end of the war, however, this has given way to growing unemployment, to the wholesale firing of Negro women, particularly in basic industry.

This process has been intensified with the development of the economic crisis. Today, Negro women are being forced back into domestic work in great numbers. In New York State, for example, this trend was officially confirmed recently when Edward Corsi, Commissioner of the State Labor Department, revealed that for the first time since the war, domestic help is readily obtainable.

Corsi in effect admitted that Negro women are not voluntarily giving up jobs, but rather are being systematically pushed out of industry. Unemployment, which has always hit the Negro woman first and hardest, plus the high cost of living, is what compels Negro women to re-enter domestic service today. Accompanying this trend is an ideological campaign to make domestic work palatable. Daily newspaper advertisements which base their arguments on the claim that most domestic workers who apply for jobs through U.S.E.S. "prefer this type of work to work in industry," are propagandizing the "virtues" of domestic work, especially of "sleep-in positions."

Inherently connected with the question of job opportunities where the Negro woman is concerned, is the special oppression she faces as Negro, as woman, and as worker. She is the victim of the white chauvinist stereotype as to where her place should be. In the film, radio, and press, the Negro woman is not pictured in her real role as breadwinner, mother, and protector of the family, but as a traditional "mammy" who puts the care of children and families of others above her own. This traditional stereotype of the Negro slave mother, which to this day appears in commercial advertisements, must be combatted and rejected as a device of the imperialists to perpetuate the white chauvinist ideology that Negro women are "backward," "inferior," and the "natural slaves" of others.

Historical Aspects

Actually, the history of the Negro woman shows that the Negro mother under slavery held a key position and played a dominant role in her own family grouping. This was due primarily to two factors: the conditions of slavery, under which marriage, as such, was non-existent, and the Negro's social status was derived from the mother and not the father; and the fact that most of the Negro people brought to these shores by the slave traders came from West Africa where the position of women, based on active participation in property control, was relatively higher in the family than that of European women.

Early historians of the slave trade recall the testimony of travelers indicating that the love of the African mother for her child was unsurpassed in any part of the world. There are numerous stories attesting to the self-sacrificial way in which East African mothers offered themselves to the slave traders in order to save their sons and Hottentot women refused food during famines until after their children were fed.

It is impossible within the confines of this article to relate the terrible sufferings and degradation undergone by Negro mothers and Negro women generally under slavery. Subject to legalized rape by the slaveowners, confined to slave pens, forced to march for eight to fourteen hours with loads on their backs and to perform back-breaking work even during pregnancy, Negro women bore a burning hatred for slavery, and undertook a large share of the responsibility for defending and nurturing the Negro family.

The Negro mother was mistress in the slave cabin, and despite the interference of master or overseer, her wishes in regard to mating and in family matters were paramount. During and after slavery, Negro women had to support themselves and the children. Necessarily playing an important role in the economic and social life of her people, the Negro woman became schooled in self-reliance, in courageous and selfless action.*

There is documentary material of great interest which shows that Negro family life and the social and political consciousness of Negro men and women underwent important changes after emancipation. One freedman observed, during the Civil War, that many men were exceedingly jealous of their newly acquired authority in family relations and insisted upon a recognition of their

superiority over women. After the Civil War, the slave rows were broken up and the tenant houses scattered all over the plantation in order that each family might carry on an independent existence. The new economic arrangement, the change in the mode of production, placed the Negro man in a position of authority in relation to his family. Purchase of homesteads also helped strengthen the authority of the male.

Thus, a former slave, who began life as a freedman on a “one-horse” farm, with his wife working as a laundress, but who later rented land and hired two men, recalls the pride which he felt because of his new status: “In my humble palace on a hill in the woods beneath the shade of towering pines and sturdy oaks, I felt as a king whose supreme commands were ‘law and gospel to my subjects.’ ”

One must see the double motive was operative here. In regard to his wife and children, the Negro man was now enabled to assume economic and other authority over the family; but he also could fight against violation of women of his group where formerly he was powerless to interfere.

The founding of the Negro church, which from the outset was under the domination of men, also tended to confirm the man’s authority in the family. Sanction for male ascendancy was found in the Bible, which for many was the highest authority in such matters.

Through these and other methods, the subordination of Negro women developed. In a few cases, instead of legally emancipating his wife and children, the husband permitted them to continue in their status of slaves. In many cases, state laws forbade a slave emancipated after a certain date to remain in the state. Therefore, the only way for many Negro wives and children to remain in the state was to become “enslaved” to their relatives. Many Negro owners of slaves were really relatives of their slaves.

In some cases, Negro women refused to become subject to the authority of the men. In defiance of the decisions of their husbands to live on the places of their former masters, many Negro women took their children and moved elsewhere.

Negro Women In Mass Organizations

This brief picture of some of the aspects of the history of the Negro woman, seen in the additional light of the fact that a high proportion of Negro women are obliged today to earn all or part of the bread of the family, helps us understand why Negro women play a most active part in the economic, social, and political life of the Negro community today. Approximately 2,500,000 Negro women are organized in social, political, and fraternal clubs and organizations. The most prominent of their organizations are the National Association of Negro women, the National Council of Negro Women the National Federation of Women’s Clubs, the Women’s Division of the Elks’ Civil Liberties Committee, the National Association of Colored Beauticians, National Negro Business Women’s League, and the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. Of these, the National Association of Negro Women, with 75,000 members, is the largest membership organization. There are numerous sororities, church women’s committees of all denominations, as well as organizations among women of West Indian descent. In some areas, N.A.A.C.P. chapters have Women’s Divisions, and recently the National Urban League established a Women’s Division for the first time in its history.

Negro women are the real active forces—the organizers and workers—in all the institutions and organizations of the Negro people. These organizations play a many-sided role, concerning themselves with all questions pertaining to the economic, political, and social life of the Negro people, and particularly of the Negro family. Many of these organizations are intimately concerned with the problems of Negro youth, in the form of providing and administering educational scholarships,

giving assistance to schools and other institutions, and offering community service. The fight for higher education in order to break down Jim Crow in higher institutions was symbolized last year, by the brilliant Negro woman student, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher of Oklahoma. The disdainful attitudes which are sometimes expressed—that Negro women’s organizations concern themselves only with “charity” work—must be exposed as of chauvinist derivation, however subtle, because while the same could be said of many organizations of white women, such attitudes fail to recognize the special character of the role of Negro women’s organizations. This approach, fails to recognize the special function which Negro women play in these organizations, which, over and above their particular function, seek to provide social services denied to Negro youth as a result of the Jim-Crow lynch system in the U.S.

The Negro Woman Worker

The negligible participation of Negro women in progressive and trade-union circles is thus all the more startling. In union after union, even in those unions where a large concentration of workers are Negro women, few Negro women are to be found as leaders or active workers. The outstanding exceptions to this are the Food and Tobacco Workers’ Union and the United Office and Professional Workers’ Union.

But why should these be exceptions? Negro women are among the most militant trade unionists. The sharecroppers’ strikes of the ’30’s were sparkplugged by Negro women. Subject to the terror of the landlord and white supremacist, they waged magnificent battles together with Negro men and white progressives in that struggle of great tradition led by the Communist Party. Negro women played a magnificent part in the pre-C.I.O. days in strikes and other struggles, both as workers and as wives of workers, to win recognition of the principle of industrial unionism, in such industries as auto, packing, steel, etc. More recently, the militancy of Negro women unionists is shown in the strike of the packinghouse workers, and even more so, in the tobacco workers’ strike—in which such leaders as Moranda Smith and Velma Hopkins emerged as outstanding trade unionists. The struggle of the tobacco workers led by Negro women later merged with the political action of Negro and white which led to the election of the first Negro in the South (in Winston Salem, N. C.) since Reconstruction days.

It is incumbent on progressive unionists to realize that in the fight for equal rights for Negro workers, it is necessary to have a special approach to Negro women workers, who, far out of proportion to other women workers, are the main breadwinners in their families. The fight to retain the Negro woman in industry and to upgrade her on the job, is a major way of struggling for the basic and special interests of the Negro woman worker. Not to recognize this feature is to miss the special aspects of the effects of the growing economic crisis, which is penalizing Negro workers, particularly Negro women workers, with special severity.

The Domestic Worker

One of the crassest manifestations of trade-union neglect of the problems of the Negro woman worker has been the failure, not only to fight against relegation of the Negro woman to domestic and similar menial work, but to organize the domestic worker. It is merely lip service for progressive unionists to speak of organizing the unorganized without turning their eyes to the serious plight of the domestic worker, who, unprotected by union standards, is also the victim of exclusion from all social and labor legislation. Only about one in ten of all Negro women workers is covered by present minimum-wage legislation, although about one-fourth of all such workers are to be found in

states having minimum-wage laws. All of the arguments heretofore projected with regard to the real difficulties of organizing the domestic workers—such as the “casual” nature of their employment, the difficulties of organizing day workers, the problem of organizing people who work in individual households, etc.,—must be overcome forthwith. There is a danger that Social-Democratic forces may enter this field to do their work of spreading disunity and demagoguery, unless progressives act quickly.

The lot of the domestic worker is one of unbearable misery. Usually, she has no definition of tasks in the household where she works. Domestic workers may have “thrown in,” in addition to cleaning and scrubbing, such tasks as washing windows, caring for the children, laundering, cooking, etc., and all at the lowest pay. The Negro domestic worker must suffer the additional indignity, in some areas, of having to seek work in virtual “slave markets” on the streets where bids are made, as from a slave block, for the hardiest workers. Many a domestic worker, on returning to her own household, must begin housework anew to keep her own family together.

Who was not enraged when it was revealed in California, in the heinous case of Dora Jones, that a Negro woman domestic was enslaved for more than 40 years in “civilized” America? Her “employer” was given a minimum sentence of a few years and complained that the sentence was for “such a long period of time.” But could Dora Jones, Negro domestic worker, be repaid for more than 40 years of her life under such conditions of exploitation and degradation? And how many cases, partaking in varying degrees of the condition of Dora Jones, are still tolerated by progressives themselves!

Only recently, in the New York State Legislature, legislative proposals were made to “fingerprint” domestic workers. The Martinez Bill did not see the light of day, because the reactionaries were concentrating on other repressive legislative measures; but here we see clearly the imprint of the African “pass” system of British imperialism (and of the German Reich in relation to the Jewish people!) being attempted in relation to women domestic workers.

It is incumbent on the trade unions to assist the Domestic Workers’ Union in every possible way to accomplish the task of organizing the exploited domestic workers, the majority of whom are Negro women. Simultaneously, a legislative fight for the inclusion of domestic workers under the benefits of the Social Security Law is vitally urgent and necessary. Here, too, recurrent questions regarding “administrative problems” of applying the law to domestic workers should be challenged and solutions found.

The continued relegation of Negro women to domestic work has helped to perpetuate and intensify chauvinism directed against all Negro women. Despite the fact that Negro women may be grandmothers or mothers, the use of the chauvinist term “girl” for adult Negro women is a common expression. The very economic relationship of Negro women to white women, which perpetuates “madam-maid” relationships, feeds chauvinist attitudes and makes it incumbent on white women progressives, and particularly Communists, to fight consciously against all manifestations of white chauvinism, open and subtle.

Chauvinism on the part of progressive white women is often expressed in their failure to have close ties of friendship with Negro women and to realize that this fight for equality of Negro women is in their own self-interest, inasmuch as the super-exploitation and oppression of Negro women tends to depress the standards of all women. Too many progressives, and even some Communists, are still guilty of exploiting Negro domestic workers, of refusing to hire them through the Domestic Workers’ Union (or of refusing to help in its expansion into those areas where it does not yet exist), and generally of participating in the vilification of “maids” when speaking to their bourgeois neighbors and their own families. Then, there is the expressed “concern” that the exploited Negro

domestic worker does not “talk” to, or is not “friendly” with, her employer, or the habit of assuming that the duty of the white progressive employer is to “inform” the Negro woman of her exploitation and her oppression which she undoubtedly knows quite intimately. Persistent challenge to every chauvinist remark as concerns the Negro woman is vitally necessary, if we are to break down the understandable distrust on the part of Negro women who are repelled by the white chauvinism they often find expressed in progressive circles.

Manifestations Of White Chauvinism

Some of the crassest expressions of chauvinism are to be found at social affairs, where, all too often, white men and women and Negro men participate in dancing, but Negro women are neglected. The acceptance of white ruling-class standards of “desirability” for women (such as light skin), the failure to extend courtesy to Negro women and to integrate Negro women into organizational leadership, are other forms of chauvinism.

Another rabid aspect of the Jim Crow oppression of the Negro woman is expressed in the numerous laws which are directed against her as regards property rights, inter-marriage (originally designed to prevent white men in the South from marrying Negro women),—and laws which hinder and deny the right of choice, not only to Negro women, but Negro and white men and women.

For white progressive women and men, and especially for Communists, the question of social relations with Negro men and women is above all a question of strictly adhering to social equality. This means ridding ourselves of the position which sometimes finds certain progressives and Communists fighting on the economic and political issues facing the Negro people, but “drawing the line” when it come to social intercourse or inter-marriage. To place the question as a “personal” and not a political matter, when such questions arise, is to be guilty of the worst kind of Social-Democratic, bourgeois-liberal thinking as regard the Negro question in American life; it is to be guilty of imbibing the poisonous white-chauvinist “theories” of a Bilbo or a Rankin. Similarly, too, with regard to guaranteeing the “security” of children. This security will be enhanced only through the struggle for the liberation and equality of all nations and peoples, and not by shielding children from the knowledge of this struggle. This means ridding ourselves of the bourgeois-liberal attitudes which “permit” Negro and white children of progressives to play together at camps when young, but draw the line when the children reach teen-age and establish boy-girl relationships.

The bourgeois ideologists have not failed, of course, to develop a special ideological offensive aimed at degrading Negro women, as part and parcel of the general reactionary ideological offensive against women of “kitchen, church, and children.” They cannot, however, with equanimity or credibility, speak of the Negro woman’s “place” as in the home; for Negro women are in other peoples’ kitchens. Hence, their task has been to intensify their theories of male “superiority” as regards the Negro woman by developing introspective attitudes which coincide with the “new school” of “psychological inferiority” of women. The whole intent of a host of articles, books, etc., has been to obscure the main responsibility for the oppression of Negro women by spreading the rotten bourgeois notion about a “battle of the sexes” and “ignoring” the fight of both Negro men and women—the whole Negro people—against their common oppressors, the white ruling class.

Chauvinist expressions also include paternalistic surprise when it is learned that Negroes are professional people. Negro professional women workers are often confronted with such remarks as “Isn’t your family proud of you?” Then, there is the reverse practice of inquiring of Negro women professionals whether “someone in the family” would like to take a job as a domestic worker.

The responsibility for overcoming these special forms of white chauvinism rests, not with the

“subjectivity” of Negro women, as it is often put, but squarely on the shoulders of white men and white women. Negro men have a special responsibility particularly in relation to rooting out attitudes of male superiority as regards women in general. There is need to root out all “humanitarian” and patronizing attitudes toward Negro women. In one community, a leading Negro trade unionist, the treasurer of her Party section, would be told by a white progressive woman after every social function: “Let me have the money; something may happen to you.” In another instance, a Negro domestic worker who wanted to join the Party was told by her employer, a Communist, that she was “too backward” and “wasn’t ready” to join the Party. In yet another community, which since the war has been populated in the proportion of sixty per cent Negro to forty per cent white, white progressive mothers maneuvered to get their children out of the school in this community. To the credit of the initiative of the Party section organizer, a Negro woman, a struggle was begun which forced a change in arrangements which the school principal, yielding to the mothers’ and to his own prejudices, had established. These arrangements involved a special class in which a few white children were isolated with “selected Negro kids” in what was termed an “experimental class in race relations.”

These chauvinist attitudes, particularly as expressed toward the Negro woman, are undoubtedly an important reason for the grossly insufficient participation of Negro women in progressive organizations and in our Party as members and leaders.

The American bourgeoisie, we must remember, is aware of the present and even greater potential role of the masses of Negro women, and is therefore not loathe to throw plums to Negroes who betray their people and do the bidding of imperialism.

Faced with the exposure of their callous attitude to Negro women, faced with the growing protests against unpunished lynchings and the legal lynchings “Northern style,” Wall Street is giving a few token positions to Negro women. Thus, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, who played a key role in the Democratic National Negro Committee to Elect Truman, was rewarded with the appointment as Assistant to Federal Security Administrator Ewing. Thus, too, Governor Dewey appointed Irene Diggs to a high post in the New York State Administration.

Another straw in the wind showing attempts to whittle down the militancy of Negro women was the State Department’s invitation to a representative of the National Council of Negro Women—the only Negro organization so designated—to witness the signing of the Atlantic Pact.

Key Issues Of Struggle

There are many key issues facing Negro women around which struggles can and must be waged.

But none so dramatizes the oppressed status of Negro womanhood as does the case of Rosa Lee Ingram, widowed Negro mother of fourteen children—two of them dead—who faces life imprisonment in a Georgia jail for the “crime” of defending herself from the indecent advances of a “white supremacist.” The Ingram case illustrates the landless, Jim Crow, oppressed status of the Negro family in America. It illumines particularly the degradation of Negro women today under American bourgeois democracy moving to fascism and war. It reflects the daily insults to which Negro women are subjected in public places, no matter what their class, status, or position. It exposes the hypocritical alibi of the lynchers of Negro manhood who have historically hidden behind the skirts of white women when they try to cover up their foul crimes with the “chivalry” of “protecting white womanhood.” But white women, today, no less than their sisters in the abolitionist and suffrage movements, must rise to challenge this lie and the whole system of Negro oppression.

American history is rich in examples of the cost to the democratic rights of both women and

men-of failure to wage this fight. The suffragists, during their first jailings, were purposely placed on cots next to Negro prostitutes to “humiliate” them. They had the wisdom to understand that the intent was to make it so painful, that no women would dare to fight for her rights if she had to face such consequences. But it was the historic shortcoming of the women’s suffrage leaders, predominantly drawn as they were from the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, that they failed to link their own struggles to the struggles for the full democratic rights of the Negro people following emancipation.

A developing consciousness on the woman question today, therefore, must not fail to recognize that the Negro question in the United States is prior to, and not equal to, the woman question; that only to the extent that we fight all chauvinist expressions and actions as regards the Negro people and fight for the full equality of the Negro people, can women as a whole advance their struggle for equal rights. For the progressive women’s movement, the Negro woman, who combines in her status the worker, the Negro, and the woman, is the vital link to this heightened political consciousness. To the extent, further, that the cause of the Negro woman worker is promoted, she will be enabled to take her rightful place in the Negro proletarian leadership of the national liberation movement, and by her active participation contribute to the entire American working class, whose historic mission is the achievement of a Socialist America—the final and full guarantee of woman’s emancipation.

The fight for Rosa Lee Ingram’s freedom is a challenge to all white women and to all progressive forces, who must begin to ask themselves: How long shall we allow this dastardly crime against all womanhood, against the Negro people, to go unchallenged! Rosa Lee Ingram’s plight and that of her sisters also carries with it a challenge to progressive cultural workers to write and sing of the Negro woman in her full courage and dignity.

The recent establishment of the National Committee to Free the Ingram Family fulfills a need long felt since the early movement which forced commutation to life imprisonment of Mrs. Ingram’s original sentence of execution. This National Committee, headed by Mary Church Terrell, a founder of the National Association of Colored Women, includes among its leaders such prominent women, Negro and white, as Therese Robinson, National Grand Directoress of the Civil Liberties Committee of the Elks, Ada B. Jackson, and Dr. Gene Weltfish.

One of the first steps of the Committee was the visit of a delegation of Negro and white citizens to this courageous, militant Negro mother imprisoned in a Georgia cell. The measure of support was so great that the Georgia authorities allowed the delegation to see her unimpeded. Since that time, however, in retaliation against the developing mass movement, the Georgia officials have moved Mrs. Ingram, who is suffering from a severe heart condition, to a worse penitentiary, at Reidsville.

Support to the work of this committee becomes a prime necessity for all progressives, particularly women. President Truman must be stripped of his pretense of “know-nothing” about the Ingram case. To free the Ingrams, support must be rallied for the success of the million-signatures campaign, and for U.N. action on the Ingram brief soon to be filed.

The struggle for jobs for Negro women is a prime issue. The growing economic crisis, with its mounting unemployment and wage-cuts and increasing evictions, is making its impact felt most heavily on the Negro masses. In one Negro community after another, Negro women, the last to be hired and the first to be fired, are the greatest sufferers from unemployment. Struggles must be developed to win jobs for Negro women in basic industry, in the white-collar occupations, in the communities, and in private utilities.

The successful campaign of the Communist Party in New York’s East Side to win jobs for Negro women in the five-and-dime stores has led to the hiring of Negro women throughout the city, even in predominantly white communities. This campaign has extended to New England and must be

waged elsewhere.

Close to 15 government agencies do not hire Negroes at all. This policy gives official sanction to, and at the same time further encourages, the pervasive Jim-Crow policies of the capitalist exploiters. A campaign to win jobs for Negro women here would thus greatly advance the whole struggle for jobs for Negro men and women. In addition, it would have a telling effect in exposing the hypocrisy of the Truman Administration's "Civil Rights" program.

A strong fight will also have to be made against the growing practice of the United States Employment Service to shunt Negro women, despite their qualifications for other jobs, only into domestic and personal service work.

Where consciousness of the special role of Negro women exists, successful struggle can be initiated which will win the support of white workers. A recent example was the initiative taken by white Communist garment workers in a shop employing 25 Negro women where three machines were idle. The issue of upgrading Negro women workers became a vital one. A boycott movement has been initiated and the machines stand unused as of this writing, the white workers refusing to adhere to strict seniority at the expense of Negro workers. Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing on this issue. Similarly, in a Packard U.A.W. local in Detroit, a fight for the maintenance of women in industry and for the upgrading of 750 women, the large majority of whom were Negro, was recently won.

The Struggle For Peace

Winning the Negro women for the struggle for peace is decisive for all other struggles. Even during the anti-Axis war, Negro women had to weep for their soldier-sons, lynched while serving in a Jim-Crow army. Are they, therefore, not interested in the struggle for peace?

The efforts of the bipartisan war makers to gain the support of the women's organizations in general, have influenced many Negro women's organizations, which, at their last annual conventions, adopted foreign-policy stands favoring the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine. Many of these organizations have worked with groups having outspoken anti-imperialist positions.

That there is profound peace sentiment among Negro women which can be mobilized for effective action is shown, not only in the magnificent response to the meetings of Eslande Goode Robeson, but also in the position announced last year by the oldest Negro women's organization, under the leadership of Mrs. Christine C. Smith, in urging a national mobilization of American Negro women in support of the United Nations. In this connection, it will be very fruitful to bring to our country a consciousness of the magnificent struggles of women in North Africa, who, though lacking in the most elementary material needs, have organized a strong movement for peace and thus stand united against a Third World War, with 81 million women in 57 nations, in the Women's International Democratic Federation.

Our Party, based on its Marxist-Leninist principles, stands foursquare on a program of full economic, political, and social equality for the Negro people and of equal rights for women. Who, more than the Negro woman, the most exploited and oppressed, belongs in our Party? Negro women can and must make an enormous contribution to the daily life and work of the Party. Concretely, this means prime responsibility lies with white men and women comrades. Negro men comrades, however, must participate in this task. Negro Communist women must everywhere now take their rightful place in Party leadership on all levels.

The strong capacities, militancy and organizational talents of Negro women, can, if well utilized by our Party, be a powerful lever for bringing forward Negro workers—men and women—as the

leading forces of the Negro people's liberation movement for cementing Negro and Wall Street imperialism, and for rooting the Party among the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class and its allies.

In our Party clubs, we must conduct an intensive discussion of the role of the Negro women, so as to equip our Party membership with clear understanding for undertaking the necessary struggles in the shops and communities. We must end the practice, in which many Negro women who join our Party, and who, in their churches, communities and fraternal groups are leaders of masses, with an invaluable mass experience to give to our Party, suddenly find themselves viewed in our clubs, not as leaders, but as people who have "to get their feet wet" organizationally. We must end this failure to create an atmosphere in our clubs in which new recruits—in this case Negro women—are confronted with the "silent treatment" or with attempts to "blueprint" them into a pattern. In addition to the white chauvinist implications in such approaches, these practices confuse the basic need for Marxist-Leninist understanding which our Party gives to all workers, and which enhances their political understanding, with chauvinist disdain for the organizational talents of new Negro members, or for the necessity to promote them into leadership.

To win the Negro women for full participation in the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist coalition, to bring her militancy and participation to even greater heights in the current and future struggles against Wall Street imperialism, progressives must acquire political consciousness as regards her special oppressed status.

It is this consciousness, accelerated by struggles, that will convince increasing thousands that only the Communist Party, as the vanguard of the working class, with its ultimate perspective of Socialism, can achieve for the Negro women—for the entire Negro people—the full equality and dignity of their stature in a Socialist society in which contributions to society are measured, not by national origin, or by color, but a society in which men and women contribute according to ability, and ultimately under Communism receive according to their needs.

Week 5

Independent Struggles

After the Russian Bolshevik Leon Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist Party in 1927, he attempted to organize a network of sympathizers who stood in opposition to Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union and his direction of the worldwide Communist movement. The Trotskyist milieu, however numerically small, was more significant in the United States than most other countries. Its relative American prominence came about both due to leading American Communists' defections to it and the weakness of the American Communist Party (which was quite hostile to Trotskyism). Both this weeks' authors, C.L.R. James and Richard Fraser, were members of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), a Trotskyist party that emerged from these developments.

James, who spent much of his life in Britain and considered himself a "Black European," was heavily influenced by a discussion he had with Leon Trotsky himself. In the exchange, James advocated Black self-organization in tandem with party struggles, whereas Trotsky believed that the Black struggle would be better advanced under a revolutionary party alone.

Fraser was responsible within the SWP for developing a theory of Black revolutionary integrationism, opposing both nationalist tendencies and the Communist Party's Black Belt thesis.

5.1 C.L.R. James, *The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in US* (1948)

Comrades, our party, with this Resolution, is preparing to make a powerful entry into a section of the class struggle that is now raging in the United States. The decay of capitalism on a world scale, the rise of the CIO in the United States, and the struggle of the Negro people, have precipitated a tremendous battle for the minds of the Negro people and for the minds of the population in the US as a whole over the Negro question. During the last few years certain sections of the bourgeoisie, recognizing the importance of this question, have made a powerful theoretical demonstration of their position, which has appeared in *The American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal, a publication that took a quarter of a million dollars to produce. Certain sections of the sentimental petty bourgeoisie have produced their spokesmen, one of whom is Lillian Smith. That has produced some very strange fruit, which however has resulted in a book which has sold some half a million copies over the last year or two. The Negro petty bourgeoisie, radical and concerned with communism, has also made its bid in the person of Richard Wright, whose books have sold over a million copies. When books

on such a controversial question as the Negro question reach the stage of selling half a million copies it means that they have left the sphere of literature and have now reached the sphere of politics.

President Truman has made his literary and theoretical declaration in the report of the Civil Rights Committee, and he has also made his political declaration in his recommendations to Congress to accept the proposals of that committee. The Communist Party is doing its hardest in the same field and has declared at one of its recent plenums that the test and touchstone of the work of the party, of its maturity in the United States, is the work it has done and does on the Negro question.

It is into this battle that we now propose to enter, in a more rounded, more consistent, and more militant form than we have entered in the past. That is the first significance of this Resolution. It is not only a guide to the actions of the party; its mere presentation to the public will mean that the policies of genuine Bolshevism are now ready to compete fully armed in the tremendous battle that is raging over the Negro question in the United States.

Now what is it that we have to say that is new? In one sense—and I quote—“nothing is new.” What we say in this Resolution has been “implicit,” it has been an “underlying conception” of our activity in the past. It has appeared in many discussions by Trotsky and in various articles and speeches. But nevertheless it has not appeared in such consistent and rounded and finished form as we propose to do in this Resolution.

We can compare what we have to say that is new, in that sense, by comparing it to previous positions on the Negro question in the socialist movement. The proletariat, as we know, must lead the struggles of all the oppressed and all those who are persecuted by capitalism. But this has been interpreted in the past—and by some very good socialists too—in the following sense: The independent struggles of the Negro people have not got much more than an episodic value, and as a matter of fact, can constitute a great danger not only to the Negroes themselves, but to the organized labor movement. The real leadership of the Negro struggle must rest in the hands of organized labor and of the Marxist party. Without that the Negro struggle is not only weak, but is likely to cause difficulties for the Negroes and dangers to organized labor. This, as I say, is the position held by many socialists in the past. Some great socialists in the United States have been associated with this attitude.

Our Standpoint

We, on the other hand, say something entirely different.

We say, number 1, that the Negro struggle, the independent Negro struggle, has a vitality and a validity of its own; that it has deep historic roots in the past of America and in present struggles; it has an organic political perspective, along which it is traveling, to one degree or another, and everything shows that at the present time it is traveling with great speed and vigor.

We say, number 2, that this independent Negro movement is able to intervene with terrific force upon the general social and political life of the nation, despite the fact that it is waged under the banner of democratic rights, and is not led necessarily either by the organized labor movement or the Marxist party.

We say, number 3, and this is the most important, that it is able to exercise a powerful influence upon the revolutionary proletariat, that it has got a great contribution to make to the development of the proletariat in the United States, and that it is in itself a constituent part of the struggle for socialism.

In this way we challenge directly any attempt to subordinate or to push to the rear the social

and political significance of the independent Negro struggle for democratic rights. That is our position. It was the position of Lenin thirty years ago. It was the position of Trotsky which he fought for during many years. It has been concretized by the general class struggle in the United States, and the tremendous struggles of the Negro people. It has been sharpened and refined by political controversy in our movement and, best of all, it has had the benefit of three or four years of practical application in the Negro struggle and in the class struggle by the Socialist Workers Party during the past few years.

Now if this position has reached the stage where we can put it forward in the shape that we propose, that means that to understand it, should be by now simpler than before; and by merely observing the Negro question, the Negro people rather, the struggles they have carried on, their ideas, we are able to see the roots of this position in a way that was difficult to see ten or even fifteen years ago. The Negro people, we say, on the basis of their own experiences, approach the conclusions of Marxism. And I will have briefly to illustrate this as has been shown in the Resolution.

First of all, on the question of imperialist war. The Negro people do not believe that the last two wars, and the one that may overtake us, are a result of the need to struggle for democracy, for freedom of the persecuted peoples by the American bourgeoisie. They cannot believe that.

On the question of the state, what Negro, particularly below the Mason-Dixon line, believes that the bourgeois state is a state above all classes, serving the needs of all the people? They may not formulate their belief in Marxist terms, but their experience drives them to reject this shibboleth of bourgeois democracy.

On the question of what is called the democratic process, the Negroes do not believe that grievances, difficulties of sections of the population, are solved by discussions, by voting, by telegrams to Congress, by what is known as the "American way."

Finally, on the question of political action. The American bourgeoisie preaches that Providence in its divine wisdom has decreed that there should be two political parties in the United States, not one, not three, not four, just two; and also in its kindness, Providence has shown that these two parties should be one, the Democratic Party, and the other, the Republican, to last from now until the end of time.

That is being challenged by increasing numbers of people in the United States. But the Negroes more than ever have shown—and any knowledge of their press and their activities tells us—that they are willing to make the break completely with that conception.

Recent Negro Struggles

Such are the ideas that are moving among the Negro people. And it is not only a question of approaching the conclusions of Marxism, in their own instinctive way, under the banner of democratic rights. We have seen during the last ten or fifteen years that the Negro people have carried on tremendous struggles, significant in themselves but still more significant as a portent of the possibilities of things to come. We saw them riot and break out in Harlem in 1935. We saw it again in 1940 when the "March On Washington" exploded and shook the American bourgeoisie, particularly the Roosevelt administration. We saw it again in Detroit and in various other towns in 1943 and later. We have seen it explode recently in the tremendous challenge and defiance of the Randolph-Reynolds movement. And, finally and most important, at the time when the American bourgeoisie presented its most powerful organization and clamped its strength upon the American people during the war by means of the American bourgeois military machine, we saw individual Negroes, groups of Negroes, masses of Negroes, hurl themselves at that machine with a reckless disregard for their

personal safety and their personal situation that shows the tremendous revolutionary potentialities that are simmering among the Negro people.

So that our theoretical position, our analysis of the situation among the Negro people—what they are *thinking*—has got evidence in what the Negro people have been *doing*.

Now we can draw from this one of the first of the important conclusions. The Randolph-Reynolds movement, the mere declaration by Reynolds and Randolph, caused a tremendous confusion in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. It disrupted the propaganda for mobilizing the nation to go into the war. You have seen also that it has seriously disrupted the passage of the important draft bill in Congress. And if not what Randolph *says* and what Randolph *proposes* but if what Randolph *expresses* can find the organizational expression which we hope it will find, then it is certain that under the banner of Negro democratic rights, asking only for an army that will not practice segregation, the Negro people will have a terrific impact, national and international, upon the preparations of the American bourgeoisie for the war. It is impossible to deny this.

Secondly. If we look at what took place after the “March on Washington” and if we look again at what took place in Harlem after the 1943 outbreak, we shall see the Negro people, by their independent mass activity and by their determination to gain their rights, have been striking terrific blows at one particular point in the Democratic Party, the link between the organized labor movement and the Southern reactionaries.

When the history of the Democratic Party comes to be written, and particularly the history of the *break-up* of the Democratic Party, it will be seen that the independent Negro struggle, the vigor with which the Negroes are protesting, their determination to gain their rights under American bourgeois democracy, has been one of the most powerful means of breaking that unnatural alliance between the most advanced section of the population—the organized labor movement—and the Southern reactionaries.

Already a Powerful Factor

Under the banner of Negro democratic rights, struggling purely for what seem to be limited objectives, the independent Negro movement is contributing to the release of the proletariat from the stranglehold of the Democratic Party and giving it an opportunity and a possibility to emerge as an independent political force.

This is our basic position. It can be concretized and will have to be developed. But it is clear that we cannot look upon the independent Negro movement as episodic or of little importance. It is a part of the political life of the country and, more important, of fundamental importance for the political development of the proletariat.

But when that is said—we have little doubt that it will be accepted—there arises for us a very important problem.

As Bolsheviks we are jealous, not only theoretically but practically, of the primary role of the organized labor movement in all fundamental struggles against capitalism. That is why for many years in the past this position on the Negro question has had some difficulty in finding itself thoroughly accepted, particularly in the revolutionary movement, because there is this difficulty—what is the relation between this movement and the primary role of the proletariat—particularly because so many Negroes, and the most disciplined, hardened, trained, highly developed sections of the Negroes, are today in the organized labor movement.

Fundamental Propositions

Now let us note first that the resolution does not falter in one single degree on fundamental propositions. It states, for instance, that the Negro struggles in the South are not merely a question of struggles of Negroes, important as those are. It is a question of the reorganization of the whole agricultural system in the United States, and therefore a matter for the proletarian revolution and the reorganization of society on socialist foundations.

Secondly, we say in the South that although the embryonic unity of whites and Negroes in the labor movement may seem small and there are difficulties in the unions, yet such is the decay of Southern society and such the fundamental significance of the proletariat, particularly when organized in labor unions, that this small movement is bound to play the decisive part in the revolutionary struggles that are inevitable.

Thirdly, the Resolution pays great care and attention to the fact that there are one and a quarter million Negroes, at least, in the organized labor movement.

On these fundamental positions we do not move one inch. Not only do we not move, we strengthen them.

But there still remains the question: what is the relationship of the independent Negro mass movement to the organized labor movement? And here we come immediately to what has been and will be a very puzzling feature unless we have our basic position clear.

Those who believe that the Negro question is in reality, purely and simply, or to a decisive extent, merely a class question, these pointed with glee to the tremendous growth of the Negro personnel in the organized labor movement. It grew in a few years from three hundred thousand to one million; it is now one and a half million. But to their surprise, instead of this lessening and weakening the struggle of the independent Negro movement, *the more the Negroes went into the labor movement, the more capitalism incorporated them into industry, the more they were accepted in the union movement, it is during that period, since 1940, that the independent mass movement has broken out with a force greater than it has ever shown before.*

That is the problem that we have to face, that we have to grasp. We cannot move forward and we cannot explain ourselves unless we have it clearly. And I know there is difficulty with it. I intend to spend some time on it, because if that is settled, all is settled. The other difficulties are incidental. If, however, this one is not clear, then we shall continually be facing difficulties which we shall doubtless solve in time, but which it must be the function of *this* Convention to try to get rid of at once.

Now Lenin has handled this problem and in the Resolution we have quoted him. He says that the dialectic of history is such that small independent nations, small nationalities, which are *powerless*—get the word, please—powerless, in the struggle against imperialism, *nevertheless* can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which can bring on to the scene the real power against imperialism—the socialist proletariat.

Let me repeat it please. Small groups, nations, nationalities, themselves powerless against imperialism, nevertheless can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which will bring on to the scene the real fundamental force against capitalism—the socialist proletariat.

In other words, as so often happens from the Marxist point of view, from the point of view of the dialectic, this question of the *leadership* is very complicated.

What Lenin is saying is that although the fundamental force is the proletariat, although these groups are powerless, although the proletariat has got to lead them, it does not by any means follow that they cannot do anything until the proletariat actually comes forward to lead them. *He says exactly the opposite is the case.*

They, by their agitation, resistance and the political developments that they can initiate, can be the means whereby the proletariat is brought on to the scene.

Not always, and every time, not the sole means, but one of the means. That is what we have to get clear.

Our Task

Now it is very well to see it from the point of view of Marxism which developed these ideas upon the basis of European and Oriental experiences. Lenin and Trotsky applied this principle to the Negro question in the United States. What we have to do is to make it concrete, and one of the best means of doing so is to dig into the history of the Negro people in the United States, and to see the relationship that has developed between them and revolutionary elements in past revolutionary struggles.

For us the center must be the Civil War in the United States and I intend briefly now to make some sharp conclusions and see if they can help us arrive at a clearer perspective. Not for historical knowledge, but to watch the movement as it develops before us, helping us to arrive at a clearer perspective as to this difficult relationship between the independent Negro movement and the revolutionary proletariat. The Civil War was a conflict between the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the Southern plantocracy. That we know. That conflict was inevitable.

But for twenty to twenty-five years before the Civil War actually broke out, the masses of the Negroes in the South, through the underground railroad, through revolts, as Aptheker has told us, and by the tremendous support and impetus that they gave to the revolutionary elements among the Abolitionists, absolutely prevented the reactionary bourgeoisie—(revolutionary later)—absolutely prevented the bourgeoisie and the plantocracy from coming to terms as they wanted to do.

In 1850 these two made a great attempt at a compromise. What broke that compromise? It was the Fugitive Slave Act. They could prevent everything else for the time being, but they could not prevent the slaves from coming, and the revolutionaries in the North from assisting them. So that we find that here in the history of the United States such is the situation of the masses of the Negro people and their readiness to revolt at the slightest opportunity, that as far back as the Civil War, in relation to the American bourgeoisie, they formed a force which *initiated* and *stimulated* and *acted as a ferment*.

That is point number one.

Point number two. The Civil War takes its course as it is bound to do. Many Negroes and their leaders make an attempt to get incorporated into the Republican Party and to get their cause embraced by the bourgeoisie. And what happens? The bourgeoisie refuses. It doesn't want to have Negroes emancipated.

Point number three. As the struggle develops, such is the situation of the Negroes in the United States, that the emancipation of the slaves becomes *an absolute necessity*, politically, organizationally and from a military point of view.

The Negroes are incorporated into the battle against the South. Not only are they incorporated here, but later they are incorporated also into the military government which smashes down the remnants of resistance in the Southern states.

But, when this is done, the Negroes are deserted by the bourgeoisie, *and there falls upon them a very terrible repression*.

That is the course of development in the central episode of American history.

Historical Anticipations

Now if it is so in the Civil War, we have the right to look to see what happened in the War of Independence. It is likely—it is not always certain—but it is likely that we shall see there some anticipations of the logical development which appeared in the Civil War. They are there.

The Negroes begin by demanding their rights. They say if you are asking that the British free you, then we should have our rights and, furthermore, slavery should be abolished. The American bourgeoisie didn't react very well to that. The Negroes insisted—those Negroes who were in the North—insisted that they should be allowed to join the Army of Independence. They were refused.

But later Washington found that it was imperative to have them, and four thousand of them fought among the thirty thousand soldiers of Washington. They gained certain rights after independence was achieved. Then sections of the bourgeoisie who were with them deserted them. And the Negro movement collapsed.

We see exactly the same thing but more intensified in the Populist movement. There is a powerful movement of one and one quarter of a million Negroes in the South (the Southern Tenant Farmers Association). They joined the Populist movement and were in the extreme left wing of this movement, when Populism was discussing whether it should go on with the Democratic Party or make the campaign as a third party. The Negroes voted for the third party and for all the most radical planks in the platform.

They fought with the Populist movement. But when Populism was defeated, there fell upon the Negroes between 1896 and about 1910 the desperate, legalized repression and persecution of the Southern states.

Some of us think it is fairly clear that the Garvey movement came and looked to Africa because there was no proletarian movement in the United States to give it a lead, to do for this great eruption of the Negroes what the Civil War and the Populist movement had done for the insurgent Negroes of those days.

And now what can we see today? Today the Negroes in the United States are organized as never before. There are more than half a million in the NAACP and, in addition to that, there are all sorts of Negro groups and organizations—the churches in particular—*every single one of which is dominated by the idea that each organization must in some manner or another contribute to the emancipation of the Negroes from capitalist humiliation and from capitalist oppression*. So that the independent Negro movement that we see today and which we see growing before our eyes—is nothing strange. It is nothing new. *It is something that has always appeared in the American movement at the first serious sign of social crisis.*

A Sign of the Times

It represents a climax to the Negro movements that we have seen in the past. From what we have seen in the past, we would expect it to have its face turned towards the labor movement. And not only from a historical point of view but today concrete experience tells us that the masses of the Negro people today look upon the CIO with a respect and consideration that they give to no other social or political force in the country. To anyone who knows the Negro people, who reads their press—and I am not speaking here specially of the Negro workers—if you watch the Negro petty bourgeoisie—reactionary, reformist types as some of them are, in all their propaganda, in all their agitation—whenever they are in any difficulties, you can see them leaning toward the labor movement. As for the masses of Negroes, they are increasingly pro-labor every day. So that it is not

only Marxist ideas; it is not only a question of Bolshevik-Marxist analysis. It is not only a question of the history of Negroes in the US.

The actual concrete facts before us show us, and anyone who wants to see, this important conclusion, that the Negro movement logically and historically and concretely is headed for the proletariat. That is the road it has always taken in the past, the road to the revolutionary forces. Today the proletariat is that force. And if these ideas that we have traced in American revolutionary crises have shown some power in the past, such is the slate of the class struggle today, such the antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat, such, too, the impetus of the Negro movements toward the proletariat, that it is clear that the Negro *movement toward the revolutionary forces*, which we have traced in the past is *stronger today than ever before*. So that we can look upon this Negro movement not only for what it has been and what it has been able to do—we are able to know as Marxists by our own theory and, our examination of American history that it is headed for the proletarian movement, that it must go there. There is nowhere else for it to go.

And further we can see that if it doesn't go there, the difficulties that the Negroes have suffered in the past when they were deserted by the revolutionary forces, those will be ten, one hundred, ten thousand times as great as in the past. The independent Negro movement, which is boiling and moving, must find its way to the proletariat. If the proletariat is not able to support it, the repression of past times when the revolutionary forces failed the Negroes will be infinitely, I repeat, infinitely, more terrible today.

Therefore our consideration of the independent Negro movement does not lessen the significance of the proletarian—the essentially proletarian—leadership. Not at all. It includes it. We are able to see that the mere existence of the CIO, its mere existence, despite the fakery of the labor leadership on the Negro question, as on all other questions, is a protection and a stimulus to the Negroes.

Penalty of Defeat

We are able to see and I will show in a minute that the Negroes are able by their activity to draw the revolutionary elements and more powerful elements in the proletariat to their side. We are coming to that. But we have to draw and emphasize again and again this important conclusion. If—and we have to take these theoretical questions into consideration—if the proletariat is defeated, if the CIO is destroyed, then there will fall upon the Negro people in the US such a repression, such a persecution, comparable to nothing that they have seen in the past. We have seen in Germany and elsewhere the barbarism that capitalism is capable of in its death agony. The Negro people in the US offer a similar opportunity to the American bourgeoisie. The American bourgeoisie have shown their understanding of the opportunity the Negro question gives them to disrupt and to attempt to corrupt and destroy the labor movement.

But the development of capitalism itself has not only given the independent Negro movement this fundamental and sharp relation with the proletariat. It has created Negro proletarians and placed them as proletarians in what were once the most oppressed and exploited masses. But in auto, steel, and coal, for example, these proletarians have now become the vanguard of the workers' struggle and have brought a substantial number of Negroes to a position of primacy in the struggle against capitalism. The backwardness and humiliation of the Negroes that shoved them into these industries, is the very thing which today is bringing them forward, and they are in the very vanguard of the proletarian movement from the very nature of the proletarian struggle itself. Now, how does this complicated interrelationship, this "Leninist" interrelationship express itself? Henry Ford could write a very good thesis on that if he were so inclined.

The Ford Experience

The Negroes in the Ford plant were incorporated by Ford: first of all he wanted them for the hard, rough work. I am also informed by the comrades from Detroit he was very anxious to play a paternalistic role with the Negro petty bourgeoisie. He wanted to show them that he was not the person that these people said he was—look! he was giving Negroes opportunities in his plant.

Number 3, he was able thus to create divisions between whites and Negroes that allowed him to pursue his anti-union, reactionary way.

What has happened within the last few years that is changed? The mass of the Negroes in the River Rouge plant, I am told, are one of the most powerful sections of the *Detroit proletariat*. They are leaders in the proletarian struggle, not the stooges Ford intended them to be.

Not only that, they act as leaders not only in the labor movement as a whole but in the Negro community. It is what they say that is decisive there. Which is very sad for Henry. And the Negro petty bourgeois have *followed the proletariat*. They are now going along with the labor movement; they have left Ford too. It is said that he has recognized it at last and that he is not going to employ any more Negroes. He thinks he will do better with women. But they will disappoint him too.

The Case of Negro Women

Now there we have a movement, essentially proletarian, proletarianized Negroes, Negroes who are part, of the organized labor movement and who dominate the Negro community.

Here it would *seem* is a place where the independent Negro movement should play a strictly subordinate role. But history takes its own course.

Let us look at what happened in Detroit in 1943.

The struggle *began over the Sojourner Truth housing development* for Negroes. Isn't that so? It continued by the activity and hostility of the Negro people to being pushed around, and finally the general dissatisfaction burst out in the rioting.

At this stage the organized labor movement had to intervene; absolutely had to intervene. In other words, owing to the activity and conflict of the Negro people, the proletariat begins to get some education in its responsibilities not only for the demands and needs of labor, but for other sections of the population. But it didn't stay there, it didn't stay there.

When the municipal election came up, the Negroes wanted to run a candidate. They put up a Negro clergyman (one of those petty bourgeois whom Ford thought he had won over).

Now the revolution sometimes needs the whip of the counter-revolution. Frankenstein, then a CIO leader, was running for Mayor. Mayor Jeffreys and the rest thought they saw an opportunity to discredit Frankenstein's campaign by calling him a Negro lover and flooding Detroit with information that the victory of Frankenstein would mean that whites and Negroes would have to live in the same houses, and so on.

Naturally Frankenstein, (in great difficulty, and sweating no doubt), had to play a peculiar course. He had to remember that the Negroes played a certain role in the labor movement, that he couldn't afford to antagonize them, that on the whole he had to be careful not to antagonize Negroes in general, and had to preserve the honor of the labor movement; and yet he did not want to give the impression that he was a Negro lover. It was difficult but that is his difficulty; not ours.

What we have to look at is what happened. *In spite of themselves* the Negro masses found themselves pushed up against the organized labor movement, and though with a lot of confusion, the organized labor movement found itself *compelled to take over, so to speak, the leadership of the Negro community*. It was very confused and hesitant, but the general line was clear.

Most remarkable of all, *this Negro clergyman in the Negro community ran on the CIO ticket*. This made Jeffreys say that the Negroes and the labor unions were planning to run Detroit. He was a little bit premature but nevertheless it showed that he could recognize these *possibilities*.

Beginnings of a Great Alliance

The movement has fallen off since, but we have seen enough to know this: That the struggle which began by Negro militants in the Negro community fighting purely for Negro rights—a simple matter of housing, and resisting people who pushed them around, resulted ultimately in—let us put it mildly—the beginnings of an alliance, a political alliance between the Negro community and the organized labor movement in Detroit.

I give you this as an example of how complicated the relationships can be between the Negro community and the organized labor movement even in a city where the Negro community is dominated by proletarians of a very high quality who have their *first* allegiance to the organized labor movement.

If we can reflect on that, if we can constantly be on the alert to see these possibilities, the leadership, the fundamental leadership that organized labor can give to the Negro movement, the basic dependence of the Negro movement upon organized labor; but we can at the same time see the kind of leadership, the kind of stimulus, the kind of impetus, the kind of anticipation that *the Negro Movement can give* to organized labor, then we shall be able to deal with all problems, not only the general problems outside, but the specific problems that the party will have to face.

Now if all this is true from a theoretical point of view, and if it is true also from a historical point of view, and if we are able to see the signs of it—not too clearly but nevertheless sufficiently for us to draw some tentative conclusions in Detroit—then we, as a party, having participated in Negro work, having taken part in it for the last three or four years, should be able to see this general movement reflected in party life and in the activity of the party. We have been able to see it.

What fundamentally has been the history of the party as I have seen it, as it has been explained, as we have heard it in discussion? The party in 1946 embarked on the task, consciously and deliberately to transform itself from a propaganda group (that is to say, a group that more or less puts over the whole program), into a mass party, in other words, a party which would draw workers not on the basis of general socialist conceptions, but on the basis of concrete activity and readiness to help them on basic problems that were immediately troubling them and which, as far as they could see, required, if not an immediate solution, at least immediate activity. It was the Negroes in the crisis of '43, '44, and '45, who came first to the party and *offered the party for the first time* the opportunity to draw masses on the basis of agitation and with the perspective of concrete activity. Our general analysis shows that this experience of the party was no accident. It took place this way because of this peculiar relationship of the Negro mass movement to the general struggle. Our first opportunity, our first experience, really to become a mass party was given to us by the Negroes.

Recent Party Experiences

Now the fact remains that a great number of Negroes who came into the party left. First of all, the most fundamental reason which has been given to me and which I see no reason to disagree with, is that the party was not quite ready to handle these tremendous problems. It could handle a specific case like the Fontana case. It could handle a case like the Hickman case and carry it through to a brilliant conclusion. But the actual day-today struggles against the bourgeoisie, and

the Negro organizations, and the inertia of the labor movement, we simply were not powerful enough to handle.

And we come to another very important conclusion here for our practical activity. If the vitality of the independent Negro movement depends in the last analysis upon the power and response of the proletariat, then life and activity, the strength of the party's Negro work must depend also—American society being what it is—upon the strength the party has in the organized labor movement and as a Marxist organization.

You see the pattern continues. It is impossible to be able to do Negro work in the sense that the party at this stage wants to do it, in mass activity, meeting the demands of the Negroes, transformation from a propaganda organization to a mass party, without great strength and power in the organized labor movement. That the convention has dealt with. It is to be remembered that this is a report on the Negro Resolution, but we must never lose sight of that; that was our experience. And in fact, I have been told that the best work has been done and the best Negro cadres have remained where our party *was strongest in the labor movement*. That must guide us in the coming period.

In addition to these there were certain subordinate reasons for our difficulties. The Negro militants who came to us came in revolt from the NAACP and these other organizations which were, as usual, like the labor bureaucracy, talking but doing little or nothing. When they came to us, we were not able, under our own banner, as I have said, to carry on a sustained mass activity on these questions.

The correct road for these Negro militants was back into the Negro mass organizations and there to do solid, patient fraction work as we do in the union movement. But they had just come from there. It was very difficult, it was very difficult for them to understand that they had come from there to us only to learn that they had to go back there again.

And, not at all to be forgotten, I am informed that the party didn't have trained, experienced personnel to be able to lead this work in the way that it should be done. So that we have been more successful with the Negro comrades in the unions, who could work in one of our fractions in the labor movement. That is good, but it is not sufficient.

Now, we hope, upon the basis of the experience that we have had, upon the fact that certain solid Negro cadres remain, upon the basis of the work that we intend to do with this Resolution, upon the basis of the impetus to thinking, study, penetration in the Negro movement, and observation of the Negroes in the trade union movement, which we hope will come from this Convention and the six months' discussion, we hope that those opportunities which were presented to us, from which we have gained some capital, we hope that we can begin again, we hope that when opportunities will be presented—we are absolutely sure they will be—then the party will be able to undertake that task and lay a solid foundation in its Negro work.

A Permanent Feature of Activity

And therefore our policy is that a clear consideration of all theoretical issues involved in what is a very difficult, very complicated and at times can be, a very exasperating question, our party proposes to you that we make a permanent, fundamental feature of our work, the work in the Negro organizations.

We say that whatever these Negro organizations are today, they represent the channel whereby the Negro people today or tomorrow will express themselves in the way we have outlined. We make our main orientation the NAACP. That is the most powerful Negro organization. Today it may

look to be petty bourgeois, reformist or whatever you think; that is not the issue.

Behind this organization, or liable to flow into it, or to create an organization which can destroy it at a future date, is the tremendous revolutionary potentiality of the Negro people that we have outlined.

We have to be there, we have to devote ourselves to this work and in much the same way that for us the trade union is the basic place where we can work, whatever may be the position of the labor bureaucracy. We concentrate on the Negro organizations and for the time being as a general rule, the NAACP is the place where we are going to work, because we are confident that the Negro movement has these great potentialities both for itself and in regard to revolutionary developments.

But as the Resolution states clearly, we go into those movements, into that movement, as we go into all others, as revolutionists.

I have been talking to one or two Negro comrades, not as many as possible but I have been talking to some and one of them says that he gets an impression that this insistence upon the significance of the Negro struggle for democratic rights gives him the feeling that when we go into the Negro movement, we may go there concerned only with a democratic program, when in reality, he says, there are many Negro militants who want Marxism. We can assure you that in saying many Negro militants want Marxism he is absolutely correct. We go there as revolutionists seeking to make those organizations into class organizations, seeking to inculcate proletarian methods of struggle, seeking to clear out the petty-bourgeois reformist leadership and substitute the leadership of organized labor or of revolutionary militants. But we do more than that.

If our analysis of the Negro people is correct, if what they think about fundamental questions approaches empirically the conclusions of Marxism, if we believe that the Negro movement is heading toward the proletarian revolution led by the proletariat, then it is absolutely imperative that we carry into those Negro organizations the fundamental doctrines of Marxism not only on the Negro question but on all the political questions of the day. We are not going into those movements to limit ourselves to the Negro struggle for democratic rights and the particular methods which may appear to be used by the majority of the Negroes in those organizations at that time. Not at all. If our analysis is sound and if we grasp its significance, we gain two things. We gain, one, the conviction to be able to stay in these movements and to work patiently under the most difficult conditions. But we gain something else. We gain a conviction of the necessity that our Marxist ideas, Marxist propaganda, our struggle for the labor party and our struggle for the proletarian revolution *must* meet some important response from the Negro militants in those organizations, and with the necessary discretion we have a fruitful field for party recruitment and the development of the general Marxist movement.

Racial Prejudices

Now there are only one or two things more that I would like to say. There is the question—and I hope you will allow me a minute or two extra—there is the question of racial prejudice. I am not talking here about going out to dinner with Negroes or having Negroes at your house or any of those things. When the party gets larger and rank-and-file Negro and white workers and others come into it, rank-and-file white workers will bring their prejudices. Negroes will bring their suspicions, and in my opinion, absolutely justified suspicions, and there will be difficulties created of a certain kind. But the party is a Bolshevik organization and on the basis of a fundamental political line and its general socialist aspirations, will be able to settle the crudest forms of those to the extent that they appear. The cadre by and large today is sound on these matters. But bourgeois race prejudice

against the Negroes in the United States is something extraordinarily powerful and of a range and subtlety that it takes years to understand and only the proletarian revolution and the break-up of the bourgeoisie will make the proletariat fully understand. Such is the tremendous power which racial prejudice exercises in the United States, at every stage, wherever the races meet. In the Resolution we select *one* series of examples.

Undoubtedly this Resolution is breaking a new stage in the organized form in which we are bringing forward Negro work and our conception of the Negro contribution, bringing it forward before the country and before the organized labor movement. We can accept it. We can feel that we shall do everything we can to carry it through. But bourgeois race prejudice isn't going to let it pass so easily. No. We have pointed out (and this has been the experience of many and particularly in the old Communist Party), that you will find many high-class unionists who accept a sound policy on the Negro question, genuinely mean to carry it out. Then they find themselves in a certain situation in the union, maybe a union to predominantly white workers, and the constant hammering home by the party of the importance of the Negro question and the significance of the Negro question in the party press and in the party propaganda and agitation begins to affect the work. There are problems created.

A problem arises and these unionists ask, couldn't we in this particular situation, not on the whole but in this crisis, couldn't we play down the Negro angle a bit. Sometimes, in fact, we have to. But you can find, and if is possible that as we expand you will find this tendency to push the Negro question back a bit. Not for any reactionary reasons but with the genuine intention to advance what looms as more important, the role of the party in the organized labor movement at large. If we have time, maybe tonight, I will tell you many instances that have been given to me. This is not an individual aberration, it is not a personal weakness of a comrade. If it were, it wouldn't find a place in the Resolution. It is the pressure of bourgeois race prejudice that will penetrate into the party and impede the development of Negro work to the stage that we want to place it.

Problems Facing Negro Militants

There are other examples. You find a Negro unionist who for thirty years of his life has been bothered with chauvinism and the problem of where the Negro people are going to find some salvation. And at last he gets into the union movement, a progressive union. He meets other unionists, he sees what the union signifies, he grasps the question of the class struggle. Good. Now he has a perspective. He comes to the revolutionary party, and there he sees in embryo, despite certain difficulties, he catches a glimpse, of the perspectives of a new society, and he is reinforced in his fundamental conceptions. When we now begin, when the party now begins to insist upon the significance and vitality of the independent Negro movement, this a shock to him.

He doesn't understand it too well. He thinks that we may be taking a step back. He doesn't quite see it. And you will find that he may align himself with those (I have seen this) who are finding some sort of objection to the projection forward of the Negro work. That is only another aspect of bourgeois race prejudice. It isn't that the Negro unionist is prejudiced. Don't misunderstand it. It is the impact of prejudice, that affects us at every turn.

There are others, there are plenty of others besides those that are mentioned here. There are petty-bourgeois Negroes who more than most Negro groups suffer terribly in a personal way from the persecutions and humiliations of bourgeois society. When they come into a fairly large party, there they are able to work genuinely for the revolution and at the same time find a social milieu in which they can be comfortable and are saved from the merciless repression and savage attacks

that bourgeois society subjects them to. I have seen, I have been told, and we shall undoubtedly see, you will find, if not today, tomorrow, some of these who, also using as argument the basis of “the class struggle” tend to push the Negro question back, so to speak, into a sort of obscurity. It seems to be forcing forward what they have gotten away from. This again, is the influence of the prejudice of bourgeois society.

Thus, *inside the party*, you get certain tendencies which are likely to stand in the way of our work. Nothing can check this but a clear fundamental theoretical line and the education of the party not abstractly, not “black and white unite and fight” (that is a very crude example) and not “the Negroes must follow the whites and the proletariat must lead them”—not at all. No. We need a careful systematic building up of historical, economic, political, literary ideas, knowledge and information, on the Negro question inside the party. Because it is only where you have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist knowledge, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the question of the races in the United States. That is what we must do.

Inescapable Difficulties

We will have, we have had difficulties in the party. We cannot escape them. I have been hearing of some. I hope the Negro comrades in the party will express themselves freely and fully. But all these difficulties assume importance and in the last analysis can be traced directly to, both on the part (and I am speaking now of the party), both on the part of the white comrades and on the part of the Negro comrades, can be traced to the fact that we have not thoroughly grasped to the fullest extent the difficulties that the party faced when it was placed before masses of Negroes coming into the party and having to deal with them as a mass party when it was still a propaganda group.

It is the settled opinion of the most experienced comrades and certainly it is mine—I have a wide experience on the Negro question—that a basic fundamental understanding, a clear understanding (within the limitations of the party and the objective situation), a clear historical and theoretical grasp of perspectives is the only cure for those difficulties that are bound to arise, and if they don’t turn up today, they are bound to turn up tomorrow. Because we are not creating them. It is the tremendous power of bourgeois society which tries to stop and tries to prevent a complete coordination and pushes itself into the party at all times. That is what is taking place. It is an aspect of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian movement. And we have to learn to meet it in a proletarian way.

Comrades, in bringing forward this Resolution, the Political Committee is telling the party now, in a manner more serious, more concentrated, more organized than, ever before, not to consider ourselves merely as the champions of Negro rights, but to make it our special business to advocate to the Negroes, to the organized labor movement and to the country at large the role which these persecuted, humiliated, despised people are going to play in the destruction of bourgeois society. The moment you say that in this American bourgeois structure, ridden with race prejudice, hatred and contempt of the Negroes, the moment we push forward what the Negroes can and will do, we shall find ourselves represented not merely as the champions of Negro rights, *but as mortal enemies of the whole bourgeois structure.*

The Revolutionary Potential

Let us not forget that in the Negro people, there sleep and are now awakening, passions of a violence exceeding perhaps, as far as these things can be compared, anything among the tremendous forces

that capitalism has created. Anyone who knows them, who knows their history, is able to talk to them intimately, watches them at their own theaters, watches them at their dances, watches them in their churches, reads their press with a discerning eye, must recognize that although their social force may not be able to compare with the social force of a corresponding number of organized workers, the hatred of bourgeois society and the readiness to destroy it when the opportunity should present itself, rests among them to a degree greater than in any other section of the population in the United States. That we must know, and must know that in this Resolution here, behind its sober, disciplined words, there is contained a clear recognition of this immense revolutionary potentiality.

When we go to the Negro movement we are preparing one of the important channels of the proletarian revolution. And we must do this not with the idea that it is for some distant future and we have a long period for theoretical preparation. No. In 1943 the miners revolted in their own way against the domination of the American bourgeoisie. The Negroes in Harlem did the same. Today the American bourgeoisie prepares for war. Once more the miners, that oppressed section, express their defiance. Randolph and Reynolds open up for the Negroes. It is a repetition on a higher scale of what took place in the midst of the war. In the period that is facing us, these two currents are bound to join. It is our task to effect that unification. Nobody else can do that but ourselves. When that unification is effected, the floodgates will be opened but we are not afraid. We shall rule the wind and the whirlwind too. We will be able to deal with any passions, forces, that are developed once we can direct them plainly and simply to the overthrow of bourgeois society. But to do this requires sober, patient, painstaking work and preparation. This is what the Resolution attempts to prepare us for. And that is why we recommend it to you for your careful study and acceptance.

5.2 Richard S. Fraser, *For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle* (1955)

1. Nationalism and the Negro Struggle

For a number of months both Comrade Breitman and myself have been working toward the opening of this discussion of the Negro question. Both, I believe, with the hope that we could enter it on common ground. But it is obvious that we cannot: we have a difference upon the fundamental question of the relationship between the Negro struggle in the United States and the struggle of oppressed nations, that is, the national question.

I cannot challenge Comrade Breitman's authority to represent the tradition of the past period, for he has been the spokesman for the party on this question for most of the past fifteen years.

On the other hand I am opposed to the nationalist conception of the Negro question which is contained not only in Comrade Breitman's article, "On the Negro Struggle, etc." (September 1954), but is implicit in the resolution on the Negro question of the 1948 Convention.

The Negro question in the U.S. was first introduced into the radical movement as a subject worthy of special consideration during the early years of the Communist International. But it was introduced as an appendage to the colonial and national questions of Europe and Asia.

This is not its proper place. For the Negro question, while bearing the superficial similarity to the colonial and national questions is fundamentally different and requires an independent treatment. In the early congresses of the Communist International, American delegates presented points of view on the Negro question. Their speeches reveal the beginning of an attempt to differentiate this

question from the main subject matter of the colonial and national questions.

This beginning did not realize any clear demarcation between these questions, and the Comintern in degeneration went backward in this as in all other respects. Under Stalin the subordination of the American Negro question to the national and colonial questions was crystallized.

It is the historical task of Trotskyism to tear the Negro question in the United States away from the national question and to establish it as an independent political problem, that it may be judged on its own merits, and its laws of development discovered.

This process was begun by the founding leaders of American Trotskyism as expressed in the position defended by Swabeck in 1933 in his discussions with Trotsky. It is this tradition which I defend rather than that expressed by Comrade Breitman.

2. The Question of Nationalism

The modern nation is exclusively a product of capitalism. It arose in Europe out of the atomization and dispersal of the productive forces which characterized feudalism.

Nations began to emerge with the growth of trade and formed the framework for the production and distribution of commodities on a capitalist basis.

Nationalism has a contradictory historical development in Europe. Trotsky elaborated this difference as the key to understanding the role of the national question in the Russian revolution. In the first place the nations of western Europe emerged in the unification of petty states around a commercial center. The problem of the bourgeois revolution was to achieve this national unification.

In eastern Europe, Russian nationalism appeared on the scene in the role of the oppressor of many small nations. The problem of national unification in the Russian revolution was the breakup of this oppressive system and to achieve the independence of the small nations.

These were the two basic expressions of the national question in Europe. But these two basic phases of national development, corresponding to different stages in the development of capitalism, each contain a multiplicity of forms and combinations of the two phases [as is] not uncommon.

The national question of Europe reveals problems such as the Scotch rebellions, wherein a nation never emerged; Holland in its revolutionary war against Spain; the peculiarity of the unification of Germany; the rise and breakup of the Austro-Hungarian empire; the revolutionary transformation of the Czarist empire into the USSR; and the many contradictory expressions of national consciousness which were revealed in the October revolution; and lastly, the peculiar phenomenon of the Jews: a nation without a territory.

But even these do not exhaust the national question, for it appears as one of the fundamental problems of the whole colonial revolution, and all the problems of national unification, and national independence, dispersal and unification, of the centrifugal and centripetal forces unleashed by the national questions, reappear in new and different forms.

And we have by no means seen everything. The African struggle, as it assumes its mature form will show us another fascinating and unique expression of the national struggle.

What constitutes the basis for nationalism? A people united by a system of commodity exchange, a language and culture expressing the needs of commodity exchange, a territory to contain these elements: all these are elements of nationalism. Which is fundamental to the concept of the nation?

Language is important but not decisive: the Ukraine was so Russified and the Ukrainian language so close to extinction that Luxemburg could refer contemptuously to it as a novelty of the intelligentsia. Yet this did not prevent Ukrainian nationalism, when awakened by the Bolsheviks, to play a decisive role in the Russian revolution, alongside the other nationalities.

It would be convenient to be able to fasten upon geography as a fundamental to nationalism: a common territory where in relative isolation a nation could develop. This has, indeed, been the condition for the existence of nations generally; still it would not satisfy the Jewish nation which existed for centuries without a territory.

The one quality which is common to all and cannot be dispensed with in consideration of any and all of the nations of Europe, of the colonial world—the one indispensable quality which they all possess, and without which none could exist; including the old nations and the new ones, the large and small, the advanced and the backward, the “classical” and the exceptional—is the quality of *their relation to a system of commodity production and circulation: its capacity to serve as a unit of commodity exchange*.

National oppression arises fundamentally out of the suppression of the right of a commodity to fulfill its normal economic function in the process of technological development and to produce and circulate commodities according to the normal laws of capitalist production.

This is at the foundation of the national oppression of every nation in Europe and the colonial world. This is the groundwork out of which national aspirations develop and from which national revolutions emerge. It is this fundamental economic relation of a people to the forces of production which creates the national question and determines the laws of motion of the national struggle. This is just as true of the cases of obscure nationalities who only achieved national consciousness after the October revolution as it was for the Netherlands, or France, or for Poland.

Comrade Breitman is thoughtful not to put words into my mouth. But I wish he were equally thoughtful in not attributing to me ideas which I think he has had every opportunity to know that I do not hold. For when he contends that I am thinking only of the classical examples of the national question, when I deny that the Negro question is a national question, he is very wrong.

The Negro question is not a national question because it lacks the fundamental groundwork for the development of nationalism; an independent system of commodity exchange, or to be more precise, a mode of life which would make possible the emergence of such a system.

This differentiates the Negro question from the most obscure of all the European national questions, for at the root of each and every one of them is to be found this fundamental relation to the productive forces.

The Negro question is a racial question: a matter of discrimination because of skin color, and that’s all.

Because of the fundamental economic problem which was inherent among the oppressed nations of eastern Europe, Lenin foresaw the revolutionary significance of the idea of the right of self-determination.

He applied this to the national question and to it alone. Women are a doubly exploited group in all society. But Lenin never applied the slogan of self-determination to the woman question. It would not make sense. And it doesn’t make very much more sense when applied to the Negro question.

It would if the Negroes were a nation. Or the embryo of a “nation within a nation” or a precapitalist people living in an isolated territory which might become the framework for a national system of commodity exchange and capitalist production. Negroes, however, are not victims of national oppression but of racial discrimination. *The right of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in their struggle*. It is, however, fundamental to the national struggle.

Despite his protestation to the contrary, Comrade Breitman holds to a basically nationalist conception of the Negro struggle.

This is contrary to the fundamental course of the Negro struggle and a vital danger to the

party. Comrade Breitman's conception of the unique quality of the Negro movement is explained by him on page 9. In comparison to the nationalist movements of Europe, Asia and Africa he says "Fraser sees one similarity and many differences between them; we see many similarities and one big difference."

Of what does this one big difference consist? According to Comrade Breitman, the only difference between the movement of the Polish nationalists under Czarism and the American Negro today is that the Negro movement "thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers that exclude Negroes from American society, showing few signs of aiming at national separatism."

Therefore, the only difference between the Poles and the Negroes is one of consciousness. But this proposition makes a theoretical shambles not only of the Negro question but of the national question too. According to this analysis, any especially oppressed group which expressed group solidarity is automatically a nation. Or an embryo of a nation. Or an embryo of a nation within a nation. This would apply equally to the women throughout the world and the untouchables of the caste system of India.

If we must ignore the fundamental economic differences in the oppression of the Polish nation and the Negro people, and conclude that the only difference between them is one of consciousness, then we have not only discarded Lenin's and Trotsky's theses on the national question, but we have completely departed from the materialist conception of history.

It is one thing for Trotsky to say that the fact that there are no cultural barriers between the Negro people and the rest of the residents of the U.S. would not be decisive if the Negroes should actually develop a movement of a separatist nature. But it is an altogether different matter for Breitman to assume that the fundamental economic and cultural conditions which form the groundwork of nationalism have no significance whatever in the consideration of the Negroes as a nation.

The basic error in Negro nationalism in the U.S. is the failure to deal with the material foundation of nationalism in general. This results in the conception that nationalism is only a matter of consciousness without material foundation. The other subordinate arguments which buttress the nationalism conception of the Negro question clearly demonstrate this error.

3. The Negro Struggle and the Russian Revolution

Comrade Breitman's point of view is most clearly revealed in the section of his article entitled "What Can Change Present Trends?"

He proposes that we consider seriously the variant that upon being awakened by the beginning of the proletarian revolution the Negroes will develop a new consciousness which will (or may) impel them along the path of a separatist struggle. He uses Trotsky as his authority both in his specific reference to this possibility in the published conversations of 1939 and also by reference to Trotsky's treatment of the problem of nationalities in the third volume of the *History of the Russian Revolution*.

The thesis of this trend of thought is as follows: In the Russian revolution a large number of important oppressed minorities were either so oppressed or so culturally backward that they had no national consciousness. Among some, the process of forced assimilation into the Great Russian imperial orbit was so overwhelming that it was inconceivable to them that they might aspire to be anything but servants of the Great Russian bureaucracy until the revolution opened their eyes to the possibility of self-determination.

Other minorities, such as the Ukrainians and many of the eastern nations, had been overcome by the Great Russians while they were a precapitalist tribal community. They never had become nations. History never afforded them the opportunity to develop a system of commodity production and distribution of their own. Because of the uneven tempo of capitalist development in eastern Europe they were prematurely swept into the entanglements of Russian imperialism before either the production, the consciousness, or the apparatus of nationalism could develop.

Nevertheless, national self-determination was a fundamental condition of their liberation. In some cases this new-found national consciousness took form in the early stages of the revolution. But in others, it was so submerged by the national chauvinism of Great Russia that it was only after the revolution that a genuine nationalism asserted itself.

It is to these nations that we are referred by Comrade Breitman as a historical justification for his conception of the Negro question.

Comrade Breitman says, in effect: There is a sufficient element of identity between these peoples and the Negroes to warrant our using them as examples of what the direction of motion of the Negro struggle might be under revolutionary conditions.

Of course, if we are even to discuss such a possibility we would have to leave aside the fundamental difference between the American Negroes and these nations; that is, the relations of these peoples to the production and distribution of commodities, the type of cultural development which this function reflected, and the geographical homeland which they occupied.

Leaving aside these, we have the question of consciousness again. But in this respect, the Negroes have just as different a problem and history from these peoples as they have in every other respect.

We are dealing principally with those nationalities in the Czarist Empire to whom national consciousness came late. The characteristic of this group was that before the Russian revolution they had had little opportunity for unified struggle, and hence no means of arriving at a fundamental political tendency. That is why their desire for self-determination did not manifest itself in the pre-revolutionary period. In order to find out the ultimate goals for which they are struggling, an oppressed people must first go through a series of elementary struggles. After that they are in a position to go to another stage in which it is possible, under favorable conditions, for them to discover the historic road which truly corresponds to their economic, political, and social development and their relation to the rest of society. In this way the consciousness of the most oppressed nationalities of Czarism seemed to all but the Bolsheviks to be the consciousness of the dominant nation: Great Russia.

How badly they were mistaken was proved in the October revolution and afterward when each one of the suppressed tribes and nations of the Czarist Empire, under the stimulus of Lenin's program for self-determination for the oppressed minorities, found at last a national consciousness.

We are asked to adopt this perspective (or to "leave the door open" for it) for the Negroes in the U.S. The best that can be said for this request is that it would be unwise for us to grant it, as it is based upon superficial reasoning. The Negro movement in the United States is one of the oldest, most continuous and most experienced movements in the entire arena of the class struggle of the world.

What labor movement has even an episodic history before 1848? Practically, only the British. The American labor movement had no real beginning until after the Civil War. The history of a movement can be somewhat measured in the leaders which it produces. Who among us remembers an important American labor leader before William A. Sylvis? But we easily recall Vessey, Turner, Tubman and Douglass.

There were, of course, labor struggles during the pre-Civil War period. But they were dwarfed in

importance beside the anti-slavery struggle, because the national question for the American people had not yet been solved. The revolution against Great Britain had established the independence of the U.S., but had produced a regime of dual power between the slave owners and capitalists, with the slave owners politically ascendant.

The whole future of the working class depended, not so much upon organizational achievements against the capitalists, as upon the solution to the question of the slave power ruling the land.

This is the fundamental reason for the belated character of the development of the stable labor movement in the U.S.

Immediately after the question of the slave power was settled, the modern labor movement arose. Although it required a little experience before it could settle upon stable forms, in a rapid succession, the National Labor Union, the Knights of Labor, the AF of L, the IWW arose. All powerful national labor organizations. It was only 20 years after the Civil War that the AF of L was founded.

It has been different for the Negro movement which has been in almost continuous existence as a genuine movement of national scope, definite objectives, and at many times embracing tremendous masses, since the days of the Nat Turner rebellion. Even before this turning point in the Negro struggle, heroes and episodes are neither few nor far between. The Negro people are the most highly organized section of the population of the country. They have had an infinite variety of experience in struggle, and are extremely conscious of their goals. These are not goals which have been prescribed for them by the ruling class, but on the contrary, the very opposite of everything the ruling class has tried to enforce. They are moreover the most politically advanced section of American society.

How in the name of common sense, much less of dialectical logic, can you propose that we seriously compare the Negroes to the oppressed tribes and obscure peasant nations of Czarist Russia, who never had ten years of continuous struggle, as compared with the centuries of continuous Negro struggle? Peoples who never had an opportunity to find out whether or not they had a basis for nationalism because of the overwhelming force of Great Russian assimilation, compared to the Negroes who have been given every opportunity to discover a basis for nationalism, precisely in forced segregation?

There are a number of historical reasons why the Negroes have never adopted a nationalist perspective, and why the normal mode of struggle for them has been anti-separatist.

But first it should be understood that it is in keeping with the nature of the Negro movement to regard its history as continuous from the days of slavery. The Negro question appeared upon the scene as a class question: The Negroes were slaves. But alongside of this grew the race question: All slaves were Negroes and the slave was designated as inferior and subhuman. This was the origin of the Negro question.

The abolition of slavery destroyed the property relations of the chattel slave system. But the plantation system survived, fitting the social relations of slavery to capitalist property relations.

Because of these unsolved problems left over from the second American revolution, the Negroes still struggle against the social relations which were in effect a hundred and fifty and more years ago.

The modern Negro movement dates roughly from the era of the cotton gin—approximately 1800. The first answer of the Negroes to the intensification of labor brought on by the extension of the cotton acreage was a series of local and regional revolts.

The slaves learned in these struggles that the slave owners were not merely individual lords of the cotton, but were also enthroned on the high seats of the nation's political capital. They had all

the laws, police forces, and the armed might of the country at their disposal.

At the same time the Northern capitalists began to feel the domination of the slave power to be too restricting upon their enterprises. The farmers began to feel the pressure of slave labor and the plantation system. These three social forces, the slaves, and the capitalists and the farmers, had in their hands the key to the whole future of the United States as a nation.

Thus the Negroes were thrust into the center of a great national struggle against the slave power. This was the only road by which any assurance of victory was possible.

Because of their position as the most exploited section of the population, each succeeding vital movement of the masses has found the Negroes in a central and advanced position in great interracial struggles against capitalist exploitation. This was true in the Reconstruction, the Radical Populist movement of the South, and finally in the modern labor movement.

4. Negro Culture and Nationalism

The factor of segregation has had the effect of providing one of the potential elements of nationalism. The segregated life of Negro slaves produced a Negro culture a hundred years ago. But language, custom, ideology and culture generally do not have an inherent logic of development. They express the socio-economic forces which bring them into being.

In the examination of Negro culture we are forced to examine first the course of development of Negro life in general. The decisive factor in the development of Negro life during the past century derived from their class position in the Civil War. In the position of that class whose liberation was at stake, as the U.S. confronted slavery, the Negroes were thrust into a central and commanding position in the struggle against the slave power which culminated in the Civil War and Reconstruction.

It was the slaves who built abolitionism, gave it ideological leadership, and a mass body of support. It was their actions which broke up the class peace between the privileged classes of the North and South. It was their policy which won the Civil War.

These factors expressed the breaking out of the Negro question from the confining limits of a narrow, provincial, local or regional question into the arena of the great national struggles of the American people. The Negroes' culture shared the same fate as did their political economy. Instead of turning further inward upon itself until a completely new and independent language and culture would emerge, the Negro culture assimilated with the national and became the greatest single factor in modifying the basic Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States.

These are expressions of the historical law of mutual assimilation between Negro and white in the United States. The social custom and political edict of segregation expresses race relations in this country. Forced assimilation is the essential expression of national relations in eastern Europe. Mutual assimilation, in defiance of segregation expresses the Negro struggle, just as profoundly as the will to self-determination expresses the struggle of the oppressed nations of eastern Europe.

It appears that the matter of Negro national consciousness, which may occur as the result of the revolution, is for Comrade Breitman an entirely mystical property. It is devoid of any basis in either political economy, culture or history and can be proven only by identifying the Negroes with the "non-classical" nationalities of Czarist Russia who were too backward, too oppressed, too illiterate and primitive, too lacking in consciousness, too unaccustomed to unified struggle to be able to realize that they were embryonic nations.

5. The Secondary Laws of Motion of the Negro Struggle

As should be plain by now, I am not so interested in “closing the door” on self-determination as I am in showing that the Negro struggle is not within the orbit of the national struggle and that it is, therefore, not the question of self-determination which is at stake.

The Negro people in the U.S. have established their fundamental goals without assistance. These goals were dictated to them by their peculiar position in society as the objects of the racial system in its only pure form.

The goals which history has dictated to them are to achieve complete equality through the elimination of racial segregation, discrimination, and prejudice. That is, the overthrow of the race system. It is from these historically conditioned conclusions that the Negro struggle, whatever its forms, has taken the path of the struggle for direct assimilation. All that we can add to this is that these goals cannot be accomplished except through the socialist revolution.

But there are circumstances under which this movement is forced to take a different turn. In this connection it is quite clear that Comrade Breitman completely misunderstands my attitude. When he says that I would consider a separatist type of development of the Negro struggle to be a calamity, he puts the cart before the horse in the rather important matter of the relation between cause and effect.

Negro separatism would not of itself be a catastrophe, but it could only *result* from a tremendous social catastrophe. One which would be of sufficient depth to alter the entire relationship of forces which has been built up as the result of the development of the modern Negro movement and the creation of the CIO. Only once during the past 130 years have the Negro masses intimated in any way that they might take the road of separatism. This was the result of a social catastrophe: the defeat of the Negroes in the Reconstruction. This defeat pushed them back into such a terrible isolation and demoralization, that there was no channel for the movement to express its traditional demand for equality. The result was the Garvey movement. This occurred, and could have occurred, only in the deepest isolation and confusion of the Negro masses. The real meaning of the Garvey movement is that it provided a transition from the abject defeat of the Negroes to the renewal of their traditional struggle for direct equality. It did not at all signify a fundamental nationalism.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there were sufficient elements of genuine separatism in the Garvey movement to have taken it in a different direction than it actually went, under different circumstances. Consequently, it cannot be excluded, with a reappearance of similar conditions which brought on the Garvey movement, under different historical circumstances, the separatist tendency might become stronger and even dominant, and the historical tendency of the struggle might change its direction. I would view it as a potentially great revolutionary movement against capitalism and welcome and support it as such. But no more “revolutionary” than the present tendency toward direct assimilation.

It is important to note here the following comparison between the Negro movement in the United States and the oppressed nations of Europe. The Negro movement expresses separation at the time of its greatest backwardness, defeat and isolation. The oppressed nations express separatism only under the favorable conditions of revolution, solidarity and enlightenment.

We must now return to the specific circumstances which were mentioned by Trotsky as being conducive to the possible development of Negro separatism, to my interpretation of them, and to Comrade Breitman’s remarks about my interpretation.

First in regard to the “Japanese invasion.” Comrade Breitman, a fairly literal-minded comrade himself, objects to my literal interpretation of Trotsky’s reference to the possibility of a Japanese invasion being a possible condition for the emergence of Negro separatism.

Now in the text (“a rough stenogram uncorrected by the participants”) there is no interpretation of this proposition. At no other place in either the published discussion or in any writing does Trotsky allude to it again. We are left with the necessity of interpreting it as is most logical and most consistent with the context in which it appears.

I am firmly persuaded that it is necessary to stick very closely to a literal construction of what Trotsky said here in order to retain his meaning, or at least that meaning which appears to me to be self-evident.

Trotsky said, “If Japan *invades* the United States.” He did not say, “If the United States embarks upon war with Japan.” Or, “If the United States wars on China.” As a matter of fact the U.S. had a long war with the Japanese, an imperialist nation, and another long war with the North Koreans, a revolutionary people. Neither of these wars created any conditions which stimulated Negro separatism. But this wasn’t what Trotsky was talking about. He said, “If Japan invades the United States.” And he must have meant just that. He didn’t mean an attack on the Hawaiian Islands, or the occupation of the Philippines, but an invasion of the continental United States in which large or small areas of the U.S. would come under the domination of an Asian imperialist power, which, however, is classified by the United States as an “inferior race.”

Such a circumstance would cause a severe shock to the whole racial structure of American society. And out of this shock might conceivably come Negro separatism. For in the beginning of a Japanese occupation, it seems highly probable that the Negroes would receive preferential treatment by the Japanese, at least to the extent of being granted equality. But this would be the equality of subjection to a foreign invader. The contradiction which this kind of situation would put the Negro people in is the circumstance which Trotsky saw as containing the possibility of developing Negro separatism.

Comrade Breitman’s proposal that an invasion of China by the U.S. might bring forth similar results is very wrong. If the Negro people began to develop a reluctance to fight against China under the conditions of a protracted war against China, they would not develop separatist tendencies. They would combine with the more class conscious white workers who felt the same way about it and develop a vital agitation leading the mass action of the workers and all the oppressed against the war.

But it is significant that Comrade Breitman immediately postulated Negro separatism as the most probable expression of their opposition to war. This derives from his nationalist conception of the Negro question. If we could agree that Trotsky’s analysis of the problem of nationalities in the Russian revolution was the key to the understanding of the Negro question I would be more sympathetic to Comrade Breitman’s tendency to see Negro separatism as the possible result of every minor change in the objective conditions of the class struggle. As it is I cannot go along with it.

Next comes the question of fascism. And again, I am inclined to rather literal construction of Trotsky’s statement, for the reason that it is the only one which corresponds to the actual possibilities. Trotsky said that if fascism should be victorious, a new condition would be created which might bring about Negro racial separatism. He wasn’t alluding to the temporary victories which might appear during the course of a long struggle against it. He specifically included a new and different national “condition” in race relations: a new privileged condition for the white workers at the expense of the Negroes, and the consequent alienation of the Negro struggle from that of the working class as a whole.

I maintain that until the complete victory of fascism the basic relation between the Negro struggle and the working class struggle will remain unaltered and even in partial and episodic defeats

will tend to grow stronger, that there will be no groundwork for the erection of a fundamentally separatist movement as long as the present basic relation between the Negro struggle and the working class struggle remains as it is.

Comrade Breitman says on page 13, "And in that case (an extended struggle against fascism) may a fascist victory not be possible in the southern states, resulting in an intensification of racial delirium and oppression beyond anything yet known." And may this not bring about a separatist development?

His contention obviously is that a victory of fascism in the South would result in something qualitatively different than exists there today. But what is at stake here is not the question of self-determination, but our conception of the southern social system. Comrade Breitman obviously disagrees with my analysis of the South or he could not possibly make such an assertion.

I have characterized the basic regime in the South since the end of Reconstruction as *fascist-like*; i.e., "herein is revealed the sociological and historical antecedent of German fascism." Further, a fascist-like regime which has now degenerated into a police dictatorship.

The present rulers of the South were raised to power by the Klan, a middle class movement of racial terrorism. This movement was controlled not by the middle class, but by the capitalist class and the plantation owners. It achieved the elimination of both the Negro movement and the labor movement from the South for an extended period of time. It was the result of a defeated and aborted revolution. It crushed bourgeois democracy and eliminated the working class and the small farmers from any participation in government. It resulted in a totalitarian type regime. It resulted in a destruction of the living standards of the masses of people, both white and black, both workers and farmers.

Since the triumph of the Klan in the 1890's which signified the triumph of a fascist-type regime, there has been no qualitative change in political relations. As the mass middle class base of the Klan was dissipated by the evolution of capitalism, the regime degenerated into a military dictatorship, which is the condition of the South today.

It has been difficult to arrive at a precise and scientific designation of the southern social system. When I say "fascist-like" it not only implies identity but difference. There are the following differences.

First, that the southern social system was established not in the period of capitalist decline but in the period of capitalist rise. The most important consequence of this difference has been that the middle class base of southern fascism was able to achieve substantial benefits from their servitude to the plantation owners and capitalists in their function as agents of the oppression of the Negroes and the workers generally. The persecution of the Jews by the German middle class got them nothing but their own degradation. As capitalist decline sets in the South, the middle class base of the southern system begins to lose its social weight and many of the benefits it originally derived from the system.

Second, the southern system occurred in an agrarian economy, whereas fascism in Europe was a phenomenon of the advanced industrial countries. In the more backward agrarian countries of Europe and Asia, where the peasantry is the main numerical force which threatens capitalism, it has not been necessary to resort to the development of a fascist movement in order to achieve counter-revolution. In the Balkan countries, a military counter-revolution was sufficient to subdue the peasantry in the revolutionary years following the Russian revolution.

The counter-revolution in the United States agrarian South during the Reconstruction required the development of a fascist-like movement long before its necessity was felt elsewhere. This was because chattel slaves are more like modern proletarians than like peasants.

The weakness of the peasantry as a class has been their petty-bourgeois character as tillers of small plots of soil to which they are attached. This has dispersed them, and made it difficult and indeed impossible for the peasantry to form a unified and homogeneous movement.

The chattel slave, the product of an ancient mode of production, has no land, no property, no nothing. He differs from the modern wage slave only in that he does not even have his own labor to sell for he doesn't even own his body. In addition to this, unlike the peasantry, slaves are worked in large numbers, and in the western hemisphere, under conditions of large-scale commercial agriculture.

This proletarian quality of the slave has resulted in the creation of movements of considerably greater homogeneity and vitality than were possible for the peasantry of Europe. Capitalism was made aware of this in both Haiti and in the U.S. Reconstruction.

The third difference between the southern system in the U.S. and European fascism is that the southern system was a regional rather than a national system. It was always surrounded by a more or less hostile social environment within the framework of a single country. It did not have national sovereignty. So even though the southern bourbons have held control of some of the most important objects of state power in the United States for many decades and have attempted to spread their social system nationally in every conceivable manner, that they have not been successful has been a source of constant pressure upon the whole social structure of the South. The great advances which the Negro movement of the South has made of recent years occur under conditions of the degeneration of the southern system. The limitations of these same advances are, however, that the basic regime established by the Klan remains intact.

A new fascist upsurge in the South would worsen the conditions of the Negroes only in *degree*, not qualitatively. Comrade Breitman's position is that there would be a qualitative difference. It seems to me that it is necessary to cope with this question fundamentally, rather than exclusively with its secondary manifestations.

There is another false conclusion inherent in Comrade Breitman's series of assumptions. A victory of neo-fascism in the South would have no fundamental effect upon the basic course of the Negro movement. For although the Negro movement is not "national" in the sense that Comrade Breitman refers to it, it is certainly national in scope; it is a single homogeneous movement throughout the country.

This was true in 1830 and it is true today. In the era before the Civil War, the movement of the slaves could take no open or legal character in the South. The northern Negro movement was the open expression of the slaves' struggle. But it also provided the fundamental leadership and program for the movement of the slaves.

A similar relation between the various geographical sections of the Negro movement exists today. This relationship is modified, however, by the fact that the specific weight of the Negro struggle outside the South is greater than it was a century ago, by virtue of the large concentration of Negroes in the northern and western cities.

6. The Question of the Independent Organization of Negroes

Comrade Breitman has asked me to express myself more clearly and fully on the vital aspect of the Negro question relating to the "independent activities" of the Negro movement.

Very well. I advocate the unqualified support of the independent organizational expressions of the Negro struggle. I consider that the various manifestations of the independent character of the Negro struggle represent an absolutely essential arena of our work. This applies to the all-Negro

organizations, as well as others.

I have a different evaluation of the quality of the independent Negro movement than does Comrade Breitman. I see the independence of the movement as expressing the fundamental aspirations of the Negro people in a contradictory manner; separate organization is the form in which the demand for assimilation is found. This results from the contradictory character of race relations in the U.S. White supremacy is created and maintained by the independent and exclusive organization of whites. Negroes are, therefore, forced into racial organization of their own in order to conduct a struggle against the race system.

On this question of the independent character of the Negro struggle Comrade Breitman is preoccupied with the form of the struggle. He tends to confuse the question of independence of form with independence as a direction of social motion. He implies constantly and even states that *by virtue of independent form*, its direction of motion may become toward social independence.

Although he has reluctantly acknowledged that we must also deal with something other than form, Comrade Breitman's complete preoccupation with it has committed him to disregard all of the fundamental economic, cultural, geographical, and historical factors, the difference in consciousness and direction of motion, the difference in origin and development, all of which set the Negro question apart from the national question in Europe. Because of the one factor of independence of form of the struggle which bears a slight similarity to the movements of oppressed nations of eastern Europe, the Negro struggle is to him, therefore, national in character and will (or may) be stimulated toward separatism by similar circumstances which produced the demand for self-determination of the national minorities of Europe.

7. Self-Determination and the White Workers

One of the signs of the vanguard character of the Negro struggle in its relation to the struggle of the working class against capitalism is the greater class consciousness of Negro workers as compared to the white working class.

This class consciousness derives from race consciousness and is rooted in the very nature of the Negro question. One of the main factors which prevents the development of class consciousness in the American working class is race prejudice. Specifically: white chauvinism.

The division of American society into races cuts across the working class. The white monopoly in skilled crafts created an aristocracy of labor corresponding to the racial division of society in general. The working class generally accepted the idea that they secure an economic advantage from the subordinate position of Negroes in the working class.

But as the role of the skilled crafts diminishes in modern industry, the possibility of maintaining an aristocratic division in the working class is revealed as a weapon against the working class as a whole, dividing it and preventing unified class action against capitalism.

Class consciousness and race prejudice do not mix. Rather one excludes the other. It is only the revolutionary socialists and the Negroes who are the implacable and conscious foes of race prejudice.

Segregation is the foundation of prejudice. The Negroes, in their struggle against segregation are constantly clearing the ground for the emergence of class consciousness in the working class as a whole.

It is the historical role of the Negro struggle to break down race prejudice in the working class and thereby to lead white workers toward class consciousness.

If the Negro struggle should change its course and strike out for racial independence, it would

deprive the working class of its most class conscious, and advanced segments. Such a development would probably doom the American working class to a long continuation of its present political backwardness.

Under these conditions, Negro separatism would be reactionary and we would fight it mercilessly along with the militant Negroes.

The movement for the 49th State was precisely such a reactionary movement. It was promoted by middle class Negroes at the very time when Negro workers were at last in a position to see the possibility of joint struggle with the white workers against the employers in the great struggles of the 1930's. This movement was rightly condemned by the militant Negroes associated with the working class movement and with the NAACP.

At the present moment, the rise to prominence of many Negro segregated educational institutions is calculated to be a counterweight to the struggle against segregation in the schools.

As the American working class reaches the very threshold of class consciousness and is on the verge of overcoming race prejudice sufficiently to take a fundamental step in consciously organizing itself as a class; at this time there will unquestionably be a revival of Negro separatism. It will be a last-ditch attempt on the part of the capitalist class to prevent working class solidarity and we will fight it.

It is not difficult under present conditions to convince even backward white workers of the idea of the right of Negroes to self-determination. This is because it corresponds to their race prejudice. It is precisely the backwardness of the white working class and the tradition of segregation which make the idea of self-determination for the Negroes more palatable and "realistic" to prejudiced white workers than the idea of immediate and unconditional equality.

This factor is another reason that Negroes tend to be hostile to the idea of their self-determination. It also reveals another important distinction between the national question as expressed in the Russian revolution and the race question in the U.S. In the struggle against Russian capitalism, the slogan of self-determination for the oppressed minorities was the key to the liberation of the Russian workers from Great Russian chauvinism.

But it is different with racial chauvinism. The foundation of racial exploitation is not forced assimilation but segregation. White chauvinism expresses essentially the ideology of segregation. By virtue of the fact that segregation is part of the implied foundation of the idea of Negro self-determination, it tends to confirm white workers in their chauvinistic backwardness.

8. On the Nature of the Slogan of Self-Determination

The idea of self-determination of the oppressed minorities of Europe has played a decisive role in the unfolding of the revolution there since 1917. What is the actual content of this idea?

First of all, of and by itself, it decides nothing for an oppressed minority except to open up the question of free choice in deciding the fundamental questions. The economic and political development of Great Russia required the subordination of petty states and principalities to the national needs, as in the unification of France and Britain. But the belated and uneven development of Russia combined the development of a single nation, Great Russia, with its imperialist oppression of subject peoples.

This expression of uneven development was typical of eastern Europe in general. And in many cases the pressure for assimilation into the dominant nation was strong enough, and the national aspirations of the oppressed minorities sufficiently subdued to inject an element of doubt as to the fundamental historical mode of direction of these peoples.

The revolutionary party cannot appear before such oppressed minorities as dictating to them that they must aspire to independence. By means of the slogan of self-determination, the Bolsheviks *invited* the oppressed minorities to undertake a struggle for national independence and promised them support if they should so decide.

Therefore, the slogan for self-determination is a *transitional* slogan; a transition to national consciousness.

What is to be determined? In the first place it is not one of two things which are involved at this stage. It is not a matter of determining either assimilation or independence. For an oppressed nation does not struggle for assimilation. It merely ceases to be a nationality and assimilates. Such a nation does not determine that it will do this, but is just absorbed into the dominant nation.

The only thing to be determined is whether to undertake a struggle for national independence.

The second phase of the question of self-determination occurs when national consciousness is already established and a nation begins to emerge. In the Russian revolution the oppressed nationalities established the conditions of their future assimilation into the USSR under the Bolshevik principle of self-determination. The question to be determined at this stage was whether the formerly oppressed nations of Czarism should give up a portion of their national sovereignty and federate into the USSR, or to assert complete independence. Either of these choices is, of course, merely the condition by which these people will eventually assimilate into world socialism which will be without national boundary lines.

Among the colonial peoples the slogan of self-determination has little if any meaning or application. Their struggles are from the beginning far advanced in comparison to the small nations of Europe. They have already determined not only that they are nations but also that they want and require complete independence from the oppressing imperialist country.

Furthermore, the nationalism of most colonial peoples is not generally questioned by the oppressor so long as it does not express the desire for independence. Britain never attempted to “assimilate” the Indians, as Russia did the Ukrainians. On the contrary the strictest division between the European and “native” cultures was always maintained as a necessary condition of the rule of the British.

The Chinese never felt the need for this kind of transitional slogan to awaken their resentment of colonial oppression or their desire to be independent of it.

Neither the Colonial Theses of the Second Congress of the Comintern, nor the theses on the Far East of the First Congress of the Fourth International give any indication that the question of self-determination plays a role in the struggle of the colonial peoples against imperialism. Theirs is a direct struggle for independence which doesn’t require this transitional vehicle. The strategic problem for the revolutionary party is considered to be to create a class differentiation in the national struggle whereby the proletariat may be able to give leadership to it.

9. The Negroes and the Question of Self-Determination

I have admitted a certain limited historical possibility in which the Negro movement might take a separatist course. Such as after the complete triumph of fascism in the U.S.

I believe that even under such circumstances the separatist movement of Negroes would probably have the same function that the Garvey movement had in its day: to provide a transition to the open struggle for direct assimilation.

But even in this circumstance, the fundamental difficulty reappears. For the slogan of self-determination was designed for the national question in Europe, and the Negro question in the U.S.

is different in kind.

If the necessities of the struggle against capitalism required the Negroes to aspire or strive for racial separation it would probably be quite as obvious as the desire for national independence of the colonial peoples. In this case the slogan of self-determination would be just as meaningless as it is today for both the colonial peoples and the Negroes in the U.S.

Negroes in the United States do not have national consciousness. This is not because they are politically backward as the Stalinists claim and as Comrade Breitman implies, but because there is no economic groundwork upon which they might build a national consciousness.

They do, however, possess race consciousness. Race consciousness is primarily the Negroes' *consciousness of equality and their willingness to struggle for its vindication*. This consciousness is *the political equivalent of the national consciousness of oppressed nations and of the class consciousness of the working class*. It is equivalent in that it provides an adequate groundwork for the solution of the question of racial discrimination.

Among the oppressed nations and classes of the world, both national and class consciousness can be fulfilled in the present epoch only through the socialist revolution. This is also true of Negro race consciousness.

What is the problem of consciousness among Negroes? Some Negroes are not conscious of their right to equality. They are victims of the pressure of white supremacy and through the B.T. Washington influence accept the social status of inequality as right and proper. They must strive to be the equivalent of whites by the standards of white supremacy.

The individual, left to his or her own resources must work out a servile solution to his or her individual problem. The social objective which is contained in this theory is the possibility of a *separate but subordinate* society for Negroes modeled after the social system of the South.

This is another reason that Negroes react with hostility to the program of Negro separatism: it is very well known to them as containing racial subordination.

Our strategical problem is to overcome the absence of race consciousness. Or, putting it another way: to find a transition to race consciousness.

To propose to the mass of workers and Negroes the idea of self-determination would be wrong. For the decisive fact in the acceptance of white supremacy is the acceptance of segregation. *The slogan of self-determination requires the desire for segregation as its foundation*. Upon this foundation national consciousness is built.

In this manner the idea of self-determination cuts across the path of our strategic problem because it encourages the acceptance of segregation; and this is the case whether it is advanced as a slogan or merely held in abeyance in our theoretical analysis.

Comrade Breitman's support of the idea of self-determination estranges him from the Negro movement on two counts. First, in relation to the mass of Negroes who have attained race consciousness. These Negroes are above the level of consciousness which requires the kind of transition which is represented in the slogan of self-determination. He proposes that the revolution will (or may) return the Negroes to a stage of ignorance and backwardness in which this elementary type of transitional slogan will correspond with their lack of consciousness.

Second, this idea contributes nothing to the consciousness of the more backward Negroes except to confirm their backwardness.

10. The Question of Method

The question of method has become involved in the discussion primarily with Comrade Breitman's preoccupation with form.

There are several other aspects of his thinking which require scrutiny from this point of view. The first of these is the tentative character of all or most of his conclusions. This is illustrated by the astonishing circumstance that some of his most important conclusions are contained in parenthetical expressions.

This has been a considerable irritation to me in replying to him: how difficult it is to break through a parenthesis to make a polemic! But in reality this does him no discredit. For this is evidently his means of saying that although he reacts with hostility to my point of view he is not prepared to propose his own in as categorical a manner as I have mine.

He has thereby left important question marks over his own point of view. I consider this a contribution to the tone of the discussion which will help to prevent the crystallization of opinion before the discussion is in a more advanced stage.

Nevertheless, I must call attention to these question marks. I have advanced a fundamental proposition of the two poles of the Negro movement being separatism and assimilation. There is nothing more fundamental to the nature of the question than its internal polar opposition. Yet Comrade Breitman, while he disagrees with my statement of this polar opposition, has only this to say: "(Such over-simplification would be unnecessary with another conception, here advanced tentatively: ...)."

On page 12. "We do not know the precise historical direction the Negro movement will take." Now it is not up to us to determine in advance all the tactical variants through which a movement must go in order to fulfill its destiny. But "...the precise historical direction" is the one thing that we are supposed to know. As a matter of fact that is the one thing which has given us the responsibility of the whole future of mankind: that we know the precise historical direction of every social movement which pertains to the international social revolution against capitalism, and the political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. If we do not know what the precise historical direction of motion of the Negro struggle is, it is high time we found out, for that is our fundamental concern.

On page 19, he says, in the same vein, "But if the Negro masses, for whatever reason and despite our advice, should determine that they can't get or don't want equality through integration..." etc. This particular question mark which Comrade Breitman puts over his own convictions is part of his mystical attachment to Negro nationalism. For he somehow knows that the Negro people will ("possibly") demand a separate state, but he cannot give any reason for it. Therefore he must include in his program, "But if the Negroes, for whatever reason" want to develop a separate society we should support them.

Yet another characteristic of Comrade Breitman's article is argument by implication.

Take for instance his handling of the Garvey movement. I have analyzed this movement on two separate occasions. Comrade Breitman apparently disagrees with this analysis. He says that I dismiss the question too lightly and am wrong in identifying Garvey with Booker T. Washington.

He doesn't like my analysis. But what is his? He doesn't give any.

Now it is just possible that he believes that my argument and analysis are completely vanquished by his few reproving words. That would indicate that he doesn't consider it necessary to restate an argument which is already conclusively proved. That is, he argues here by implication. As elsewhere in the article, he relies upon traditional conceptions to argue for him. But these are precisely the conceptions which I have challenged, and very specifically, too.

It may be that there are others who, like Comrade Breitman consider the traditional conception of questions to be sufficient evidence of their correctness, by virtue of their traditional existence. But Comrade Breitman sets himself the task of convincing me and the whole party of the errors of my point of view. This requires more than an implied argument.

11. Self-Determination and Stalinism

I believe that I have referred before to the astonishing fact that our resolution on the Negro question is probably unique in all the political resolutions of the party in that it doesn't even mention Stalinism.

The Stalinists rank very high among our political enemies. They are, at least, our most serious competitors for the allegiance of the radical Negroes. Yet we have never published a criticism of their program for Negroes.

The only possible inference which could be drawn from this circumstance is that we have no programmatic or theoretical criticism of the Stalinists. Comrade Breitman justifies this inference in his proposition that our difference with the Stalinists is a tactical and propaganda difference: that they defend the right of the Negroes to self-determination in a vulgar and bureaucratic manner.

Comrade Breitman's frivolous description, on page 16, of what the Stalinist position on the Negro question is, does the Stalinists a great injustice. For the groundwork of the Stalinist conception of the Negro question is the nationalist conception of the Negro question. And this is Comrade Breitman's fundamental ground.

The main difference between the position of Comrade Breitman and that of the Stalinists is that where he is tentative, they are sure; where he is vague, they are clear; where Comrade Breitman says that the Negroes may develop separatist tendencies, the Stalinists say that the Negroes *will*.

Comrade Breitman designates the Negroes as a nation, not directly, but by his reference to the identity of the Negro struggle and the problem of the "non-classical" nationalities of the Russian revolution. The Stalinists say that the Negroes are a nation because they fulfill all of the economic and cultural conditions which are the basis of nationalism.

Comrade Breitman suggests that I would be a poor one to clarify and explain how our defense of the Negroes' right to self-determination differs from the Stalinists'. And he is quite right. For I do not believe that the question of self-determination is at stake in the Negro struggle. The concept of self-determination is a reactionary idea which cuts across the historical line of development of the struggle, confusing its nature, its aims and objectives.

I have upon several occasions alluded to the hostility with which many militant Negroes regard the theory of Negro self-determination. But it is quite true that the Communist Party has a considerable Negro cadre, and upon occasion this has been pointed out as a contradiction to my contention of the attitude of Negroes toward the question of their self-determination.

This is, to be sure, a militant group of Negroes, and if they are not devoted to the idea of self-determination, they are at least tolerant of it to the extent that they are willing to live in a party which holds this idea in theoretical abeyance.

But the idea of self-determination for Negroes in the U.S. is no more fantastic than the theory of socialism in one country and all the political fantasies which flow from it. When a person of any race or nationality whatever, becomes so corrupted in thinking as to be able to accept the fundamental political line of Stalinism, it should not be too hard to accept the idea of self-determination for American Negroes, even as expounded by the Stalinists.

There is another side to the problem of Stalinism. The Stalinist party goes through a regular

cyclical crisis over the question of race prejudice. Periods of theoretical reaffirmation of the theory of Negro self-determination alternate with purges and campaigns against white chauvinism.

This hectic internal life around the race question, is caused primarily by the fact that the basic theory of the Stalinists on the Negro struggle does nothing to liberate white workers from prejudice, but on the other hand corresponds to their backwardness and tends to confirm them in it.

Our criticism of Stalinism must be a fundamental one. For I conceive it to be our task as far as theory is concerned to vindicate in every conceivable manner and in all phases, the Negro struggle for equality. The confusion of the Negro question with the national question in Europe and the colonial question serves only to obscure the real nature of this struggle and constitutes a qualification, or limitation to the validity of the real Negro struggle.

Summary

1. The Negro question in the United States is not a national [one], but is the question of racial discrimination.

2. I disagree with the proposition that the study of the national question in the Russian revolution gives specific illumination to the Negro question in the United States, except in that it reveals a qualitative difference between them.

3. Essentially, only the complete victory of fascism in the U.S. could transform the movement for direct assimilation through immediate equality into one of racial independence.

4. The dual nature of the Negro struggle arises from the fact that a whole people regardless of class distinction are the victims of discrimination. This problem of a whole people can be solved only through the proletarian revolution, under the leadership of the working class. The Negro struggle is therefore not the same as the class struggle, but in its independent character is allied to the working class. Because of the independent form of the Negro movement, it does not thereby become a national or separatist struggle, but draws its laws of development from its character as a racial struggle against segregation and discrimination.

5. The question of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in the Negro struggle.

6. We have in our resolution and in the party consciousness on the Negro question, as expressed by Comrade Breitman, a conception of Negro nationalism and the importance of the idea of Negro self-determination. I believe that this should be combated and eliminated. First, because it is dialectically incorrect. Second, because most Negroes are hostile to it on a completely progressive basis. Third, because it teaches white workers nothing but tends to confirm them in their traditional race prejudice.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Comrade Breitman for his reply, which in its own way was straight-forward and more revealing than I had anticipated. I hope that he will not consider that it has revealed more to me than is justified by its content or by direct implication.

Week 6

Nationalism, Internal Colonialism and the Black Bourgeoisie

The 1949 Chinese Revolution and 1959 Cuban Revolution both brought Communist parties to power in those respective countries. In the context of these victories and ongoing wars of national liberation (Vietnam, Algeria, etc.) in the post-World War II era, many Western intellectuals looked to anti-imperialist Third World decolonization struggles instead of Russia for inspiration and, sometimes, leadership. The Sino-Soviet split between the world's two largest Communist-led states only increased the polarization of international Communist opinion. The repudiation of Stalin by his successor Nikita Khrushchev in the "Secret Speech" led many who were inclined towards Stalin-era theory and practice towards Maoist tendencies.

Harold Cruse was briefly a member of the American Communist Party but his politics were largely Black nationalist and anti-integrationist in orientation. He was both an art critic and supporter of the arts, co-founding the Black Arts Theater and School with Amiri Baraka.

After World War II, the American Communist Party was largely eclipsed by the Civil Rights Movement on issues of Black freedom. It also suffered mass defections due to Khrushchev's speech and the USSR's 1956 crushing of the Hungarian uprising; many former members repudiated Communism entirely.

Harry Haywood and his wife Gwendolyn Midlo Hall were expelled from the Communist Party in the late 1950s, but Haywood continued to participate in a number of anti-revisionist organizing activities. (Anti-revisionism refers to being in opposition to the "revisionism" of Khrushchev—both Stalinism and Maoism are considered anti-revisionist philosophies).

6.1 Harold Cruse, Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American (1962)

Revolutionary Nationalism and Western Marxism

Many of Western Marxism's fundamental theoretical formulations concerning revolution and nationalism are seriously challenged by the Cuban Revolution. American Marxism, which, since World War II, has undergone a progressive loss of influence and prestige, is challenged most profoundly.

For while most American Marxists assert that the Cuban Revolution substantiates their theories of nationalism, national liberation and revolution, in fact the Cuban success is more nearly a *success de circonstance*. Orthodox Marxists were unable to foresee it, and indeed opposed Castro until the last minute. One would hope that such a development might cause American radicals to re-evaluate their habitual methods of perceiving social realities; but in the spate of written analyses of the Cuban Revolution one looks in vain for a new idea or a fleeting spark of creative theoretical inspiration apropos of the situation in the United States.

The failure of American Marxists to work out a meaningful approach to revolutionary nationalism has special significance for the American Negro. The Negro has a relationship to the dominant culture of the United States similar to that of colonies and semi-dependents to their particular foreign overseers: the Negro is the American problem of underdevelopment. The failure of American Marxists to understand the bond between the Negro and the colonial peoples of the world has led to their failure to develop theories that would be of value to Negroes in the United States.

As far as American Marxists are concerned, it appears that thirty-odd years of failure on the North American mainland are now being offered compensatory vindication "ninety miles from home." With all due respect to the Marxists, however, the hard facts remain. Revolutionary nationalism has not waited for Western Marxian thought to catch up with the realities of the "underdeveloped" world. From underdevelopment itself have come the indigenous schools of theory and practice for achieving independence. The liberation of the colonies before the socialist revolution in the West is not orthodox Marxism (although it might be called Maoism or Castroism). As long as American Marxists cannot deal with the implications of revolutionary nationalism, both abroad and at home, they will continue to play the role of revolutionaries by proxy.

The revolutionary initiative has passed to the colonial world, and in the United States is passing to the Negro, while Western Marxists theorize, temporize and debate. The success of the colonial and semi-colonial revolutions is not now, if it ever was, dependent upon the prior success of the Western proletariat. Indeed, the reverse may now be true; namely, that the success of the latter is aided by the weakening of the imperial outposts of Western Capitalism. What is true of the colonial world is also true of the Negro in the United States. Here, the Negro is leading the revolutionary force, independent and ahead of the Marxists in the development of a movement towards social change.

The American Negro: A Subject of Domestic Colonialism

The American Negro shares with colonial peoples many of the socioeconomic factors which form the material basis for present-day revolutionary nationalism. Like the peoples of underdeveloped countries, the Negro suffers in varying degree from hunger, illiteracy, disease, ties to the land, urban and semi-urban slums, cultural starvation, and the psychological reactions to being ruled over by others not of his kind. He experiences the tyranny imposed upon the lives of those who inhabit underdeveloped countries. In the words of a Mexican writer, Enrique Gonzales Pedrero, underdevelopment creates a situation where that which exists "only half exists," where "countries are almost countries, only fifty percent nations, and a man who inhabits these countries is a dependent being, a sub-man." Such a man depends "not on himself but on other men and other outside worlds that order him around, counsel and guide him like a newly born infant."

From the beginning, the American Negro has existed as a colonial being. His enslavement coincided with the colonial expansion of European powers and was nothing more or less than a condition of domestic colonialism. Instead of the United States establishing a colonial empire in

Africa, it brought the colonial system home and installed it in the Southern states. When the Civil War broke up the slave system and the Negro was emancipated, he gained only partial freedom. Emancipation elevated him only to the position of a semi-dependent man, not to that of an equal or independent being.

The immense wealth and democratic pretensions of the American way of life have often served to obscure the real conditions under which the eighteen to twenty million Negroes in the United States live. As a wage laborer or tenant farmer, the Negro is discriminated against and exploited. Those in the educated, professional, and intellectual classes suffer a similar fate. Except for a very small percentage of the Negro intelligentsia, the Negro functions in a subcultural world made up, usually of necessity, of his own race only. This is much more than a problem of racial discrimination; it is a problem of political, economic, cultural and administrative development.

American Marxists, however, have never been able to understand the implications of the Negro's position in the social structure of the United States. They have no more been able to see the Negro as having revolutionary potentialities in his own right, than European Marxists could see the revolutionary aspirations of their colonials as being independent of, and not subordinate to, their own. As Western Marxism had no adequate revolutionary theory for the colonies, American Marxists have no adequate theory for the Negro. The belief of some American Marxists in a political alliance of Negroes and whites is based on a superficial assessment of the Negro's social status: the notion that the Negro is an integral part of the American nation in the same way as is the white working class. Although this idea of Negro and white unity is convenient in describing the American multinational and multiracial makeup, it cannot withstand a deeper analysis of the components which make American society what it is.

Negroes have never been equal to whites of any class in economic, social, cultural, or political status, and very few whites of any class have ever regarded them as such. The Negro is not really an integral part of the American nation beyond the convenient formal recognition that he lives within the borders of the United States. From the white's point of view, the Negro is not related to the "we," the Negro is the "they." This attitude assumes its most extreme expression in the Southern states and spreads out over the nation in varying modes of racial mores. The only factor which differentiates the Negro's status from that of a pure colonial status is that his position is maintained in the "home" country in close proximity to the dominant racial group. It is not at all remarkable then that the semi-colonial status of the Negro has given rise to nationalist movements. It would be surprising if it had not. Although Negro nationalism today is a reflection of the revolutionary nationalism that is changing the world, the present nationalist movement stems from a tradition dating back to the period of World War I.

Negro nationalism came into its own at that time with the appearance of Marcus Garvey and his "Back to Africa" movement. Garvey mobilized large sections of the discontented urban petit-bourgeois and working-class elements from the West Indies and the South into the greatest mass movement yet achieved in American Negro history. The Garvey movement was revolutionary nationalism being expressed in the very heart of Western capitalism. Despite the obvious parallels to colonial revolutions, however, Marxists of all parties not only rejected Garvey, but have traditionally ostracized Negro nationalism.

American Marxism has neither understood the nature of Negro nationalism, nor dealt with its roots in American society. When the Communists first promulgated the Negro question as a "national question" in 1928, they wanted a national question without nationalism. They posed the question mechanically because they did not really understand it. They relegated the "national" aspects of the Negro question to the "black belt" of the South, despite the fact that Garvey's

“national movement” had been organized in 1916 in a northern urban center where the Negro was, according to the Communists, a “national minority,” but not a “nation,” as he was in the Southern states. Of course, the national character of the Negro has little to do with what part of the country he lives in. Wherever he lives, he is restricted. His national boundaries are the color of his skin, his racial characteristics, and the social conditions within this subcultural world.

The ramifications of the national and colonial question are clear only if the initial bourgeois character of national movements is understood. According to American Marxism, Negro movements do not have “bourgeois nationalist” beginnings. American Marxists have fabricated the term “Negro Liberation Movement”—an “all-class” affair united around a program of civil and political equality, the beginnings of which they approximately date back to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. True, the NAACP was, from its inception, and is still, a bourgeois movement. However, it is a distortion to characterize this particular organization as the sole repository of the beginnings of the Negro bourgeois movement. Such a narrow analysis cannot explain how or why there are two divergent trends in Negro life today: pro-integration and anti-integration. That is to say, it does not explain the origins of the nationalist wing, composed of black nationalists, Black Muslims and other minor Negro nationalist grouping, as an outgrowth of basic conflicts within the early bourgeois movements (circa 1900), from which also developed the present day NAACP-Martin Luther King-student coalition. Furthermore, the Marxian version of the NAACP’s origins does not explain why the nationalist wing and the NAACP wing oppose each other, or why the overwhelming majority of Negroes are uncommitted to either one. There is widespread dissatisfaction among various classes of Negroes with the NAACP’s approach to racial problems. On the other hand, in recent years the nationalists have been gaining support and prestige among uncommitted Negroes. This is especially true of the Muslims, the newest Negro nationalist phenomenon.

The rise of free African nations and the Cuban Revolution have, without a doubt, stirred up the latent nationalism of many Negroes. The popular acclaim given Fidel Castro by the working class Negroes of Harlem during his visit in the fall of 1960 demonstrated that the effects of the colonial revolutions are reaching the American Negro and arousing his nationalist impulses. Many Negroes, who are neither nationalists nor supporters of the NAACP, are becoming impatient with the NAACP-Martin Luther King-student legalistic and “passive resistance” tactics. They suspect that the long-drawn-out battle of attrition with which the NAACP integration movement is faced may very well end in no more than Pyrrhic victories. They feel that racial integration, as a goal, lacks the tangible objectives needed to bring about genuine equality. After all, social and racial equality remain intangible goals unless they are related to seizure and retention of objectives which can be used as levers to exert political, social, economic, and administrative power in society. Power cannot be wielded from integrated lunch counters, waiting rooms, schools, housing, baseball teams, or love affairs, even though these are social advances.

There emerges from this dilemma a recognizable third trend, personified in the case of Robert F. Williams. Williams was forced to take an anti-NAACP position, but he was not a nationalist and was critical of Marxists. As a rebel, Williams’ objectives were the same as those of the NAACP; he differed only in his approach. His seemingly “revolutionary” stance is thwarted by the same lack of substance that makes a program of racial integration unsatisfactory to many Negroes. Williams resorted to arms for defense purposes; but arms are superfluous in terms of the objectives of racial integration, and to the seizure of actual centers of social power. The adherents of this third trend—young social rebels who are followers of Williams’ Monroe Movement—are faced with this predicament. They are neither avowed nationalists nor NAACPers. They consider themselves

“revolutionary,” but do not have revolutionary objectives. However, they are not yet a force, and their future importance will rest, no doubt, upon how much influence the nationalist wing will exert in the Negro community. The main trends in Negro life are becoming more and more polarized around the issues of pro and anti-integration.

Integration vs. Separation: History and Interpretation

Negro historiography does not offer a very clear explanation of how the American Negro has become what he is today. As written, Negro history appears as a parade of lesser and greater personalities against a clamor of many contending anonymous voices and a welter of spasmodic trends all negating each other. Through the pages of Negro history the Negro marches, always arriving but never getting anywhere. His “national goals” are always receding.

Integration vs. separation has become polarized around two main wings of racial ideology, with fateful implications for the Negro movement and the country at large. Yet we are faced with a problem in racial ideology without any means of properly understanding how to deal with it. The dilemma arises from a lack of comprehension of the historical origins of the conflict.

The problem is complicated by a lack of recognition that the conflict even exists. The fundamental economic and cultural issues at stake in this conflict cannot be dealt with by American sociologists for the simple reason that sociologists never admit that such issues should exist at all in American society. They talk of “Americanizing” all the varied racial elements in the United States; but, when it is clear that certain racial elements are not being “Americanized,” socially, economically, or culturally, the sociologists proffer nothing but total evasion, or more studies on “the nature of prejudice.” Hence problems remain with us in a neglected state of suspension until they break out in what are considered to be “negative,” “antisocial,” “anti-white,” “antidemocratic” reactions.

One of the few attempts to bring a semblance of order to the dominant trends in the chaos of Negro history was made by Marxist historians in the 1930’s and 1940’s. However, it proved to be a one-sided analysis which failed to examine the class structure of the Negro people. Viewing Negro history as a parade from slavery to socialism, the Marxist historians favor certain Negro personalities uncritically while ignoring others who played vital roles. Major figures, such as Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, who do not fit into the Communist stereotype of Negro heroes are ignored or downgraded. In the process, Marxist historians have further obscured the roots of the current conflict in racial ideology. Under the aegis of other slogans, issues and rivalries, the pro-integration vs. anti-integration controversy first appeared at the turn of the century in the famous Booker T. Washington-W.E.B. Du Bois debate. Washington’s position was that the Negro had to achieve economic self-sufficiency before demanding his political rights. This position led Washington to take a less “militant” stand on civil rights than did other Negro leaders, such as Du Bois, who accused Washington of compromising with the racists on the Negro’s political position in the South. It is not sufficient, however, to judge Washington purely on the political policies he advocated for the Negro in the South. For Washington gave voice to an important trend in Negro life, one that made him the most popular leader American Negroes have had. The Washington-Du Bois controversy was not a debate between representatives of reaction and progress, as Communist historians have asserted, but over the correct tactics for the emerging Negro bourgeoisie.

From the Reconstruction era on, the would-be Negro bourgeoisie in the United States confronted unique difficulties quite unlike those experienced by the young bourgeoisie in colonial situations. As a class, the Negro bourgeoisie wanted liberty and equality, but also money, prestige, and political power. How to achieve all this within the American framework was a difficult problem, since the

whites had a monopoly on these benefits of Western civilization, and looked upon the new aspirants as interlopers and upstarts. The Negro bourgeoisie was trapped and stymied by the entrenched and expanding power of American capitalism. Unlike the situation in the colonial area, the Negro could not seize the power he wanted nor oust “foreigners.” Hence he turned inward toward organizations of fraternal, religious, nationalistic, educational and political natures. There was much frustrated bickering and internal conflict within this new class over strategy and tactics. Finally the issues boiled down to that of politics vs. economics, and emerged in the Washington-Du Bois controversy.

In this context, it is clear that Washington’s program for a “separate” Negro economy was not compatible with the idea of integration into the dominant white economy. In 1907 Du Bois complained of Washington that: He is striving nobly to make Negro artisans business men and property-owners; but it is impossible, under modern competitive methods, for working men and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.¹

Yet Washington could not logically seek participation in “white” politics in so far as such politics were a reflection of the mastery of whites in the surrounding economy. He reasoned that since Negroes had no chance to take part in the white world as producers and proprietors, what value was there in seeking political rights immediately? Herbert Aptheker, the leading Marxist authority on Negro history, quotes Washington saying: “Brains, property, and character for the Negro will settle the question of civil rights. The best course to pursue in regard to a civil rights bill in the South is to let it alone; let it alone and it will settle itself. Good school teachers and plenty of money to pay them will be more potent in settling the race question than many civil rights bills and investigation committees.”² This was the typical Washington attitude—a bourgeois attitude, practical and pragmatic, based on the expediencies of the situation. Washington sought to train and develop a new class. He had a longer-range view than most of his contemporaries, and for his plans he wanted racial peace at any cost.

Few of the implications of this can be found in Marxist interpretations of Negro history. By taking a partisan position in favor of Du Bois, Marxists dismiss the economic aspects of the question in favor of purely political. This is the same as saying that the Negro Bourgeoisie had no right to try to become capitalists—an idea that makes no historical sense whatsoever. If a small proprietor, native to an underdeveloped country, should want to oust foreign capitalists and take over his internal markets, why should not the Negro proprietor have the same desire? Of course, a substantial Negro bourgeoisie never developed in the United States. Although this fact obscured and complicated the problems of Negro nationalism, it did not and does not change the principles involved. Washington sought to develop a Negro bourgeoisie. He failed. But his failure was no greater than that of those who sought equality through politics.

Washington’s role in developing an economic program to counteract the Negro’s social position is central to the emergence of Negro nationalism, and accounts for much of his popularity among Negroes. Yet Aptheker makes the error of assessing Washington purely on political grounds. On this basis, of course, Aptheker finds him not “revolutionary” or “militant” in the fashion that befits a Negro leader, past or present. He rejects the historic-economic-class basis of Washington’s philosophy, although these are essential in analyzing social movements, personalities, or historical situations. Aptheker has not seen Washington in the light of what he was: the leading spokesman and theoretician of the new Negro capitalists, whom he was trying to mold into existence. All that Aptheker has to say about Washington is summed up by him as follows: Mr. Washington’s policy amounted objectively to an acceptance by the Negro of second class citizenship. His appearance

¹Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago, A.C. Mclurg, 1907)

²E. Davidson Washington, *Selected Speeches of Booker T. Washington*, Doubleday, New York, p.6

on the historical stage and the growth of his influence coincided with and reflected the propertied interests' resistance to the farmers' and workers' great protest movements in the generations spanning the close of the nineteenth and the opening of the twentieth centuries. American imperialism conquers the South during these years and Mr. Washington's programs of industrial education, ultra-gradualism and opposition to independent political activity and trade unionism assisted in this conquest.³ Thus is the Marxian scheme about the "Negro people" projected back into history—a people without classes or differing class interests.

It is naïve to believe that any aspiring member of the bourgeoisie would have been interested in trade-unionism and the political action of farmers. But American Marxists cannot "see" the Negro at all unless he is storming the barricades, either in the present or in history. Does it make any sense to look back into history and expect to find Negroes involved in trade unionism and political action in the most lynch-ridden decade the South has ever known? Anyone reading about the South at the turn of the century must wonder how Negroes managed to survive at all, let alone become involved in political activity when politics was dominated by the Ku Klux Klan. According to Aptheker, however, the Negroes who supported Washington were wrong. It was the handful of Negro militants from above the Mason-Dixon Line who had never known slavery, who had never known Southern poverty and illiteracy, the whip of the lynch-mad KKK, or the peasant's agony of landlessness, who were correct in their high-sounding idealistic criticism of Washington. These were, Aptheker tells us, within a politically revolutionary tradition—a tradition which in fact had not even emerged when Washington died!

After the Washington-Du Bois debate, Du Bois went on to help form the NAACP in 1909. Washington died in 1915. The controversy continued, however, in the conflict between the NAACP and the Garvey movement.

In 1916, Marcus Garvey, the West Indian-born nationalist, organized his "Back to Africa" movement in the United States. Garvey had, from his earliest years, been deeply influenced by the racial and economic philosophies of Booker T. Washington. Adopting what he wanted from Washington's ideas, Garvey carried them further—advocating Negro self-sufficiency in the United States linked, this time, with the idea of regaining access to the African homeland as a basis for constructing a viable black economy. Whereas Washington had earlier chosen an accommodationist position in the South to achieve his objectives, Garvey added the racial ingredient of black nationalism to Washington's ideas with potent effect. This development paralleled the bourgeois origins of the colonial revolutions then in their initial stages in Africa and Asia. Coming from a British colony, Garvey had the psychology of a colonial revolutionary and acted as such.

With the rise of nationalism, Du Bois and the NAACP took a strong stand against the Garvey movement and against revolutionary nationalism. The issues were much deeper than mere rivalry between different factions for the leadership of Negro politics. The rise of Garvey nationalism meant that the NAACP became the accommodationists and the nationalists became the militants. From its very inception, the Negro bourgeois movement found itself deeply split over aims, ideology, and tactics, growing out of its unique position of contending for its aims in the very heart of Western capitalism. Neither the nationalist side of the bourgeois movement nor the reformist NAACP wing, however, were able to vanquish the social barriers facing Negroes in the United States. The Garvey movement found its answer in seeking a way out—"Back to Africa!" where the nationalist revolution had elbow room, where there was land, resources, sovereignty—all that the black man had been denied in the United States.

The Garvey era manifested the most self-conscious expression of nationality in the entire history

³Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of Negro People in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951)

of the Negro in the United States. To refrain from pointing this out, as Aptheker does in his essays on Negro history, is inexcusable. In his essay, "The Negro in World War I," Aptheker says: "What was the position of the Negro people during the years of Wilson's 'New Freedom'?" He then mentions the activities of the NAACP, the National Race Congress of 1915, and the formation in 1915 of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. But in discussing the racial unrest of the time, Aptheker fails to mention the Garvey movement, despite the fact that it had organized more Negroes than any other organization in the three years following its establishment in 1916. The causes for these omissions are, of course, apparent: orthodox Western Marxism cannot incorporate nationalism into its schema.

With the NAACP and the Garvey movement growing apace, the "Negro People" had two "Negro Liberation Movements" to contend with. Never was an oppressed people so richly endowed with leadership; the only difficulty was that these two movements were at bitter odds with one another. Furthermore, within the Negro community, prejudice about lighter and darker skin coloring also served as a basis for class stratification. Thus, when retaliating against Du Bois' criticisms of his movement, Garvey attacked him on the basis of his skin color, and assailed the assimilationist values of the upper-class Negro leadership. In addition, the Garvey "blacks" and the NAACP "coloreds" disagreed as to which was the true "motherland"—black Africa or white America.

During the period when the Communists looked upon the Negro question as a national question, some Communist writers perceived the positive, as well as the negative, aspects of Garvey's appeal. Harry Haywood, for example, wrote that the Garvey movement "reflected the widening rift between the policies of the Negro bourgeois reformism and the life and needs of the sorely pressed people." He sees in Garvey's "renunciation of the whole program of interracialism" a belief that the upper-class Negro leadership was "motivated solely by their desire of cultural assimilation," and that they "banked their hopes for Negro equality on support from the white enemy." Haywood sympathized with this position, seeing in the "huge movement lead by Garvey" a "deep feeling for the intrinsic national character of the Negro problem."

In 1959, the Communists withdrew the concept of "self-determination" in the black belt, and sidestepped the question of the Negro's "national character." Instead, they adopted a position essentially the same as that of the NAACP. Their present goal is to secure "with all speed" the "fullest realization of genuinely equal economic, political and social status with all other nationalities and individual citizens of the United States"—this to be accompanied by "genuinely representative government, with proportionate representation in the areas of Negro majority population in the South." This position is essentially no different from that supported by the NAACP.

Thus, it is not surprising that it is difficult to understand the present conflict within the Negro movement; the roots of the conflict have been obliterated. While most historians do not attempt at all to bring order to the chaos of Negro history, those who have—the Marxists—find it convenient from a theoretical standpoint to see Negroes in history as black proletarian "prototypes" and forerunners of the "black workers" who will participate in the proletarian revolution. This Aptheker-Communist Party mythology, created around patronizing deification of Negro slave heroes (Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, etc.), results in abstracting them from their proper historical context and making it appear that they are relevant to modern reality. Of course, there will be those Marxists who will argue that their inability to come to terms in theory with Negro nationalism does not arise from an error in their interpretations of the role of the Negro bourgeoisie, of Washington, or Du Bois. They will defend all the historical romanticism and the sentimental slave hero worship of the Aptheker Cult. They will say that all this is past history and has no bearing on the "new situation." But if one takes this position, then of what

value is the Marxist historical method? The flaws in the Marxist theoretical approach lead to the inability to cope with the implications of Negro Nationalism.

Negro Nationalism and the Left

To the extent that the myth of a uniform “Negro People” has endured, a clear understanding of the causes of Negro nationalism has been prevented. In reality, no such uniformity exists. There are class divisions among Negroes, and it is misleading to maintain that the interests of the Negro working and middle class are identical. To be sure, a middle-class NAACP leader and an illiterate farmhand in Mississippi or a porter who lives in Harlem all want civil rights. However, it would be enlightening to examine why the NAACP is not composed of Negro porters and farmhands, but only of Negroes of a certain type.

What we must ask is why these classes are not all striving in the same directions and with the same degrees of intensity. Why are some lagging behind the integration movement, and still others in conflict with it? Where is the integration movement going? Into what is the integration movement integrating? Is the Negro middle class integrating into the white middle class? Are integrated lunch counters and waiting stations commensurate with integration into the “mainstream of American life”? Will the Negro ten percent of the population get ten percent representation in the local, state and national legislatures?—or ten percent representation in the exclusive club of the “power elite”? Why are some Negroes anti-integration, others pro-integration, and still others uncommitted? Why is there such a lack of real unity among different Negro classes toward one objective? Why are there only some 400,000 members in the NAACP out of a total Negro population of some 18 and 20 million? Why does this membership constantly fluctuate? Why is the NAACP called a Negro organization when it is an interracial organization? Why are the Negro nationalist organizations “all Negro”? Why do nationalist organizations have a far greater proportion of working-class Negro membership than the NAACP? Finally, why is it that the Marxists, of all groups, are at this late date tail-ending organizations such as the NAACP (King, CORE, etc.), which do not have the broad support of Negro workers and farmers? To attempt to answer these questions we must consider why the interests of the Negro bourgeoisie have become separated from those of the Negro working classes.

Tracing the origins of the Negro bourgeoisie back to the Booker T. Washington period (circa 1900), E. Franklin Frazier, a Negro sociologist and non-Marxist scholar, came to the enlightening conclusion that “the black bourgeoisie lacks the economic basis that would give it roots in the world of reality.”⁴ Frazier shows that the failure of the Negro to establish an economic base in American society served to sever the Negro bourgeoisie, in its “slow and difficult occupational differentiation,” from any economic, and therefore cultural and organizational ties with the Negro working class. Since the Negro bourgeoisie does not, in the main, control the Negro “market” in the United States economy, and since it derives its income from whatever “integrated” occupational advantages it has achieved, it has neither developed a sense of association of its status with that of the Negro working class, nor a “community” of economic, political, or cultural interests conducive to cultivating “nationalistic sentiments.” Today, except for the issue of civil rights, no unity of interests exists between the Negro middle class and the Negro working class. Furthermore, large segments of the modern Negro bourgeoisie have played a continually regressive “non-national” role in Negro affairs. Thriving off the crumbs of integration, these bourgeois elements have become de-racialized and de-cultured, leaving the Negro working class without voice or leadership, while

⁴Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957)

serving the negative role of class buffer between the deprived working class and the white ruling elites. In this respect, such groups have become a social millstone around the necks of the Negro working class—a point which none of the militant phrases that accompany the racial integration movement down the road to “racial attrition” should be allowed to obscure.

The dilemma of the Negro intellectual in the United States results from the duality of his position. Detached from the Negro working class, he tries to integrate and to gain full membership in a stagnating and declining Western society. At the same time, failing to gain entry to the status quo, he resorts to talking like a revolutionary, championing revolutionary nationalism and its social dynamism in the underdeveloped world. But this gesture of flirting with the revolutionary nationalism of the non-West does not mask the fact that the American Negro intellectual is floating in ideological space. He is caught up in the world contradiction. Forced to face up to the colonial revolution and to make shallow propaganda out of it for himself, the American Negro intellectual is unable to cement his ties with the more racial-minded segments of the Negro working class. For this would require him to take a nationalistic stand in American politics—which he is loath to do. Nevertheless, the impact of revolutionary nationalism in the non-Western world is forcing certain Negro intellectuals to take a nationalist position in regard to their American situation.

Although Frazier does not delve into the nature of nationalism or connect the rise of nationalism with the failure of the Negro bourgeoisie to establish the “economic basis” of which he writes, it can be seen that the sense of a need for economic self-sufficiency is one of the causes for the persistence of nationalist groupings in Negro life. The attempt to organize and agitate for Negro ascendancy in and control of the Negro market is expressed in such racial slogans as “Buy Black.” The Negro nationalist ideology regards all the social ills from which the Negroes suffer as being caused by the lack of economic control over the segregated Negro community. Since the nationalists do not envision a time when whites will voluntarily end segregation, they feel that it is necessary to gain control of the economic welfare of the segregated community. Moreover, many Negro nationalists, such as the Black Muslims, actually believe that racial separation is in the best interests of both races. Other maintain this separatist position because of the fact of the persistence of segregation.

When Communists and other Marxists imply that racial integration represents an all-class movement for liberation, it indicates that they have lost touch with the realities of Negro life. They fail to concern themselves with the mind of the working-class Negro in the depths of the ghetto, or the nationalistic yearnings of those hundreds of thousands of ghetto Negroes whose every aspiration has been negated by white society. Instead Marxists gear their position to Negro middle-class aspirations and ideology. Such Marxists support the position of the Negro bourgeoisie in denying, condemning, or ignoring the existence of Negro nationalism in the United States—while regarding the reality of nationalism in the colonial world as something peculiar to “exotic” peoples. The measure of the lack of appeal to the working classes of the Marxist movement is indicated by the fact that Negro nationalist movements are basically working-class in character while the new Negroes attracted to the Marxist movement are of bourgeois outlook and sympathies.

Ironically, even within Marxist organizations Negroes have had to function as a numerical minority, and have been subordinated to the will of a white majority on all crucial matters of racial policy. What the Marxists called “Negro-white unity” within their organizations was, in reality, white domination. Thus the Marxist movement took a position of favoring a racial equality that did not even exist within the organization of the movement itself. Today, the Marxist organizations which advocate racial integration do not have a single objective for the Negro that is not advocated by the NAACP or some other reform organization. It is only by virtue of asserting the “necessity of socialism” that the Marxist movement is not altogether superfluous. It could not be otherwise. For

Marxism has stripped the Negro question of every theoretical concern for the class, color, ethnic, economic, cultural, psychological, and “national” complexities. They have no program apart from uttering the visionary call for “integration plus socialism” or “socialism plus integration.”

When Marxists speak of socialism to the Negro, they leave many young Negro social rebels unimpressed. Many concrete questions remain unanswered. What guarantee do Negroes have that socialism means racial equality any more than does capitalist democracy? Would socialism mean the assimilation of the Negro into the dominant racial group? Although this would be “racial democracy” of a kind, the Negro would wield no political power as a minority. If he desired to exert political power as a racial minority, he might, even under socialism, be accused of being “nationalistic.” In other words, the failure of American capitalist abundance to help solve the crying problems of the Negro’s existence, cannot be fobbed off on some future socialist heaven.

We have learned that the means to the end are just as important as the end itself. In this regard, Marxists have always been very naïve about the psychology of the Negro. It was always an easy matter for Marxists to find Negro careerists, social climbers, and parlor radicals to agree with the Marxist position on the Negro masses. However, it rarely occurred to Marxists that, to the average Negro, the means used by Marxists were as significant as the ends. Thus, except in times of national catastrophe (such as in the Depression of the 30’s), Marxist means, suitable only for bourgeois reform, seldom approximated the aspirations of the majority of Negroes. Lacking a working-class character, Marxism in the United States cannot objectively analyze the role of the bourgeoisie or take a political position in Negro affairs that would be more in keeping with aspirations of the masses.

The failure to deal adequately with the Negro question is the chief cause of American Marxism’s ultimate alienation from the vital stream of American life. This political and theoretical deficiency poses a serious and vexing problem for the younger generation who today have become involved in political activity centered around the defense of Cuba. Some accept Marxism; others voice criticisms of Marxist parties as being conservative or otherwise limited in their grasp of present realities. All of these young people are more or less part of what is loosely called the “New Left” (a trend not limited to the United States). It is now the responsibility of these new forces to find the new thinking and new approaches needed to cope with the old problems. Open-minded whites of the New Left must understand that Negro consciousness in the United States will be plagued with the conflict between the compulsions toward integration and the compulsions toward separation. It is the inescapable result of semi-dependence.

The Negro in the United States can no more look to American Marxist schema than the colonials and semi-dependents could conform to the Western Marxist timetable for revolutionary advances. Those on the American left who support revolutionary nationalism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America must also accept the validity of Negro nationalism in the United States. Is it not just as valid for Negro nationalists to want to separate from American whites as it is for Cuban nationalists to want to separate economically and politically from the United States? The answer cannot hinge merely on pragmatic practicalities. It is a political question which involves the inherent right accruing to individuals, groups, nations and national minorities; i.e., the right of political separation from another political entity when joint existence is incompatible, coercive, unequal, or otherwise injurious to the rights of one or both. This is a principle that must be upheld, all expedient prejudices to the contrary.

It is up to the Negro to take the organizational, political, and economic steps necessary to raise and defend his status. The present situation in racial affairs will inevitably force nationalist movements to make demands which should be supported by people who are not Negro nationalists.

The nationalists may be forced to demand the right of political separation. This too must be upheld because it is the surest means of achieving Federal action on all Negro demands of an economic or political nature. It will be the most direct means of publicizing the fact that the American government's policy on underdevelopment areas must be complemented by the same approach to Negro underdevelopment in the United States.

It is pointless to argue, as many do, that Negro nationalism is an invalid ideology for Negroes to have in American life, or that the nationalist ideas of economic self-sufficiency or the "separate Negro economy" are unrealistic or utopian. Perhaps they are, but it must be clearly understood that as long as racial integration remains a built-in characteristic of American society, nationalist ideology will continue to grow and spread. If allowed to spread unchecked and unameliorated, the end result can only be racial wars in the United States. This is no idle prophecy, for there are many convinced Negro nationalists who maintain the idea of the eventual acceptance of the Negro as a full-fledged American without regard to race, creed, or color, is also utopian and will never be realized. Can it be said, in all truth, that nationalist groups such as the Black Muslims are being unrealistic when they reject white society as a lost cause in terms of fulfilling any humanistic promises for the Negro? For whites to react subjectively to this attitude solves nothing. It must be understood. It must be seen that this rejection of white society has valid reasons. White society, the Muslims feel, is sick, immoral, dishonest, and filled with hate for non-whites. Their rejection of white society is analogous to the colonial peoples' rejection of imperialist rule. The difference is only that people in colonies can succeed and American Negro nationalists cannot. The peculiar position of Negro nationalists in the United States requires them to set themselves against the dominance of whites and still manage to live in the same country.

It has to be admitted that it is impossible for American society as it is now constituted to integrate or assimilate the Negro. Jim Crow is a built-in component of the American social structure. There is no getting around it. Moreover, there is no organized force in the United States at present capable of altering the structural form of American society. Due to his semi-dependent status in society, the American Negro is the only potentially revolutionary force in the United States today. From the Negro himself must come the revolutionary social theories of an economic, cultural, and political nature that will be his guides for social action—the new philosophies of social change. If the white working class is ever to move in the direction of demanding structural changes in society, it will be the Negro who will furnish the initial force.

The more the system frustrates the integration efforts of the Negro, the more he will be forced to resolve in his own consciousness the contradiction and conflict inherent in the pro-and anti-integration trends in his racial and historical background. Out of this process, new organizational forms will emerge in Negro life to cope with new demands and new situations. To be sure, much of this necessity will be empirical, and no one can say how much time this process will take to work itself toward its own logical ends. But it will be revolutionary pioneering by that segment of our society most suitable to and most amenable to pioneering—the have-nots, the victims of the American brand of social underdevelopment.

The coming coalition of Negro organizations will contain nationalist elements in roles of conspicuous leadership. It cannot and will not be subordinate to any white groups with which it is allied. There is no longer room for the revolutionary paternalism that has been the hallmark of organizations such as the Communist Party. This is what the New Left must clearly understand in its future relations with Negro movements that are indigenous to the Negro community.

6.2 Harry Haywood with Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Is the Black Bourgeoisie the Leader of the Black Liberation Movement?* (1966)

While the growth of Black Nationalism, the drive of the basic masses for self-realization and identity is objectively revolutionary and anti-imperialist, this by no means implies that all its forms and manifestations are revolutionary. The question is not so simple.

Black Nationalism, as that of all oppressed peoples, is of a contradictory nature. There are tendencies within it which forward the struggle for liberation, and there are tendencies which objectively detract from the struggle, which warp and hinder it. This distinction arises from the dual nature of the nationalism of an oppressed people, based upon class conflicts within the national revolutionary movement. For this reason, revolutionaries cannot indiscriminately support all features and manifestations of nationalism, but must emphasize the demands and aspirations of the basic masses. Our criterion must be to what extent specific forms, expressions or tendencies bring the masses into conflict with the dominant white power structure. From this point of view, there are reformist and revolutionary tendencies in both the integrationist movement and the nationalist-oriented movements.

It is our opinion that the "Great Debate" raging in the Black community over Integration vs. Separation gives only a superficial and distorted picture of the true issues and problems involved. It reflects mainly the power struggle between two sections of black bourgeoisie.

The direct integrationist or assimilationist group fights for ideological leadership of the masses, mainly in order to advance its own narrow group of well-educated and "acceptable" Negroes, although their integrationist program is entirely unrealistic for the vast majority while the ghetto nationalist sector, economically based on the northern urban Black community, indulges in fantasies of building up a separate Black "Free Enterprise" economy as the solution. Neither section of the Black bourgeoisie is capable of leading the type of struggle necessary to win Black freedom. The basic masses must therefore forge their own instrument and fight for a program of liberation that will not subordinate their interests to those of either sector of the black bourgeoisie.

The main overriding task confronting the Black people is the mobilization of their entire resources to take full advantage of the present crisis within the ranks of the enemy.

Harold Cruse in his article, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,"¹ which has exerted considerable influence in left circles, involves himself in the toils of the ghetto nationalists, elaborates a theory for them, and then calls upon white progressives to fall in behind this "revolutionary" leadership. Instead of fighting for a revolutionary program based upon the needs of the working people he seems to be distracted by the din and clamor of the Integration versus Separation debate and disparages the self-defense movement in the Deep South. He sees only two trends: the integrationist trend as represented by the assimilationist sector of the Black bourgeoisie, and the separatist trend represented by its nationalist sector. He then proceeds to narrow down the issue to the clash between them. The masses, he contends, have no choice but to follow one or the other sector of this bourgeoisie:

... the Negro working class must either follow the bourgeoisie when it leads on civil rights or swing to the (bourgeois) Nationalist wing. It has no other perspective except racial apathy or stalemate.²

¹Harold W. Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," *Studies on the Left* 2/3 (1962): 12-25.

²Cruse, "Reply" [to Clark Foreman], *Studies on the Left* 3/1 (1962): 70.

Cruse thus neatly writes off the possibility for the basic masses to fight independently and forge their own revolutionary movement. Evidently dazzled by the “militant” talk of the nationalist leaders, he latches onto the ghetto nationalist current, seeing in it the wave of the future. Equating the narrow class aims of this stratum to those of the masses, he imputes a revolutionary potential to its petty strivings for a larger share in the ghetto market in the northern urban centers.

He professes to see in this conflict a “challenge” to white ruling class domination of the Negro urban communities, “which are owned lock, stock and barrel by white absentee proprietors” and are “the crucial areas in which the economic exploitation of the Negro is focused.”

“It is in this area,” he contends, “that the most crucial American class struggle lies.” “It is only the nationalist wing which vocally objects to this exploitation.”

Cruse berates the Communist Party for its failure to see the class divisions among the Black people, for pursuing the “myth of a uniform Negro people,” and attempting to beguile us “into believing that any Negro was simply one of the ‘Negro people’ whether a cotton-picker, a show girl, a steel-worker, a political appointee of the party in power, or the editor and publisher of Ebony magazine.”³

This blurring over class lines in the Black community, he contends, has led the Communist Party into “adopting a position essentially no different from that supported by the NAACP.” Ironically, Cruse, while seeking to disassociate himself from the old Left, falls into the same type of mistake which, if pursued, would lead to the same bankruptcy and blind alley in which the CPUSA now finds itself. Cruse differentiates between the assimilationist and nationalist sectors of the Black bourgeoisie, but at this point his class analysis falls down. He fails to mention the objective conflict of interest and aspirations between the basic, most exploited and oppressed Black masses, north and south, and the aspirations of the ghetto nationalist sector of the Black bourgeoisie. While the CPUSA glosses over clear lines in the Black community and ends up tailing the bourgeois assimilationists, Cruse glosses over the objective conflict of interest among the class components of Black nationalist movements and ends up trailing the ghetto nationalists. While the CPUSA rejects all nationalism as an “obstacle in the path to Negro freedom,”⁴ Cruse apparently considers all Black Nationalism, even its most escapist, utopian manifestations, as revolutionary, and is prepared to follow their leadership. Clearly, both positions subordinate the interests of the basic masses to one or the other sectors of the Black bourgeoisie. Both tend to hinder the development of a revolutionary Black nationalist trend which is already beginning to manifest itself in practice in the movement for self-defense in the Deep South, and among Black workers and radical intelligentsia throughout the country.

The key to Cruse’s thinking on the question of liberation of oppressed peoples is his assumption that nationalist movements are primarily a bourgeois effort, in which the struggle of the bourgeoisie for control of the national market is the pivotal revolutionary factor. Hence, his reliance on the bourgeoisie as the natural leader of those. This oversimplified formula runs throughout his article and is a complete variance with contemporary theory, practice, and experience in national liberation movements. It is an outdated concept. And it is particularly unrealistic when it is applied to the Negro question and the attempt is made to impute to the conflict over the ghetto market the importance of a major contradiction between the nationalist bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism. The petty strivings of this weak, non-industrial, marginal bourgeoisie, largely removed from the Deep South areas of Black population concentration, and operating in the major cities of the North is presented as a “challenge” to white ruling dominance, and as the “real economics of the

³Cruse, “Reply” [to Richard Greenleaf], *Studies on the Left* 3/1 (1962): 62.

⁴Claude Lightfoot, *Political Affairs* (July 1962).

American race question.” He attempts to identify the ghetto petty-bourgeois stratum with the colonial bourgeoisie whose fight is for a national market. He fails to understand that even in the advanced semi-colonial countries today, the market factor is no longer the major element in the national revolutionary movement. He fails to take into account the change in the social essence of the national question since the onset of the general crisis of the imperialist system following World War I.

... the essence of the national question lies at present in the struggle of the masses of the people in the colonies and of the dependent nationalities against financial exploitation against financial enslavement, and the cultural effacement of these colonies and these nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nationality. What significance can the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of the various nationalities have when the national question is presented in this manner? Certainly, not a decisive significance, and in certain cases not even important significance. It is perfectly obvious that we are concerned mainly, not with the fact that the bourgeoisie of one nationality is beating or can best the bourgeoisie of another nationality in the competitive struggle, but with the fact that the imperialist group of the ruling nationality exploits and oppresses the main masses, and above all, the peasant masses of the colonial and dependent nationalities, and exploiting them, it thereby draws them into struggle against imperialism.⁵

⁵J. Stalin, *Leninism I*, 245–46

Week 7

Automation and the Outsiders

James Boggs, longtime husband of activist Grace Lee Boggs, was a self-educated Detroit auto worker from Alabama. He was involved in several groups in the Trotskyist milieu, including C.L.R. James' Johnson-Forest Tendency and later the Correspondence Publishing Committee. (James sometimes used the pen name J.R. Johnson and former Trotsky secretary Raya Dunayevskaya published under the pseudonym Freddie Forest.)

In the wide-ranging "The American Revolution," Boggs examines the dynamics of the Detroit economy and workplace as deindustrialization is beginning to take its toll on the city.

7.1 James Boggs, *The American Revolution* (1963)

There are two sides to every question but only one side is right. I believe in democracy, but I don't believe in being too damn democratic. In other words, I believe that everyone has a right to his opinion, but I don't believe he has a right to be hypocritical or sly about it, and I believe that it is my responsibility to fight and right those opinions that are wrong.

People are not born with opinions. Their opinions are shaped by their environments and their teachers, and they can be shaped by the wrong environment and the wrong teachers. A baby is not born with hate, but a lot of babies in the United States are taught hate.

Those who have the most power can do the most shaping and the most teaching, and if they are teaching what I believe is wrong, then I believe their power should be taken away from them.

That is what I hope this book will help to achieve. I especially recommend it to the FBI and the CIA and all those who plan to save and secure the world on the false premise that the world can be made safe and secure by freezing the ideas and creativity of man.

I am a factory worker but I know more than just factory work. I know the difference between what would sound right if one lived in a society of logical people and what *is* right when you live in a society of real people with real differences. It may sound perfectly natural to a highly educated and logical person, even when he hears people saying that there is going to be a big riot, to assume that there will not be a big riot because the authorities have everything under control. But if *I* kept hearing people say that there was going to be a big riot and I saw one of these logical people standing in the middle, I would tell him he'd better get out of the way because he sure was going to get killed.

Reforms and revolutions are created by the illogical actions of people. Very few logical people ever make reforms and none make revolutions. Rights are what you make and what you take.

James Boggs
Detroit, May 1, 1963

Chapter 1: The Rise and Fall of the Union

In the last twenty years an industrial revolution has been taking place in the United States at a pace faster than that of any country in the world, transforming social layers of this country on a scale never before dreamed of. So fast has this industrial revolution been developing that 60 percent of the jobs held by the working population today did not even exist during the First World War, while 70 percent of the jobs that existed in this country in 1900 don't exist today. Not only have work classifications been fundamentally altered, but the work force has multiplied from 20 million in 1900 to 40 million in 1944 to 68 million today. The change is not only in numbers. Over 20 million of those working today are women, and by 1970 it is expected that women workers will have increased to 30,000,000—a work force of women which will be one-and-a-half times the entire work force of 1900.

The United States has transformed itself so rapidly from an agricultural country to an industrial country, and as an industrial country has undergone such rapid industrial revolutions that the question of who is in what class becomes an ever-wider and more complicated question. Today's member of the middle class is the son or daughter of yesterday's worker.

When I was a child, my mother's chief ambition was to learn how to read and write, because if she had been able to read and write she could have become a first-class cook for some rich white people. That, for her, would have been success and the realization of what was, for her and in her day, a high ambition. Her ambition for me was that I should obtain an education so that I would not have to do the things she had to do. In America, more than in any other country, the revolutions in the mode of production have been accompanied by changes in the composition and status of classes. Today most workers in the plant have been to high school and quite a few have even been to college. All either plan or wish to send their sons and daughters to college—their sons so they won't have to work in the factory on what they call a dull and automated job; their daughters (get this!) so that they won't have to marry some bum but can make their own living and be free to decide whether they want to marry or not marry, unhampered as they have been in years gone by, when the big aim was to raise a girl so that she'd be able to meet and marry a good hard-working man who would provide for her and the children.

America is therefore at the stage where no class is a homogeneous segregated bloc as in the early days in Europe when, fresh out of feudalism, everything was controlled by a few large owners of estates and factories, while the rest of the population were the direct servants of the ruling class, whatever the form in which they worked for it. Nor is it like the United States in the period before the Civil War when, in the South, you had the big landowners with millions of slaves watched over by a few straw bosses, while in the North you had craftsmen in small shops, farmers, and textile millworkers. Nor is it like the 1920's when the farms were being mechanized and the rural population was pouring into the big cities to man the machines and the assembly lines of the mass production industries that had grown up since the First World War.

In the 1930's, with the country in a deep economic crisis, the old craft unions went into a state of decline, and people in panic and disillusionment began to create new forms of organization. They

were spurred on by an administration which called itself the New Deal and which, in order to save the country from total collapse, initiated certain reforms, thereby creating an arena in which the people could act. This led to a wave of further social reforms and the birth of the CIO which at that point was the biggest social reform movement that had ever taken place in America. Radical groupings for the first time had a mass force in action within which they could propagate and agitate for their theories and ideas, ideas which were predominantly based on European concepts of organization, and on Marx's, Lenin's, and Trotsky's theory of the class struggle. Thousands of young intellectuals, most of them the sons and daughters of European immigrants, began to take part in and become part of the labor movement. At that time the validity of their approach was strengthened by the fact that the bulk of the American workers were still "raw workers" and not at all articulate—sharecroppers, auto workers, textile workers, rubber workers.

What has transpired since then? The sons of the factory workers and coal miners have become teachers, engineers, draftsmen, scientists, social workers. In fact today, even the radicals no longer think of their children replacing them on the assembly line, or with the pick and shovel in the coal mine, or behind the tractor. Today the largest bulk of organized workers in this country is made up of truckers, dispatchers, etc., in the transport industries. The other large bulk, mainly unorganized, is composed of teachers. There is a growing army of technicians and engineers who today have the same status in industry as did the plumbers, carpenters, and skilled workers in yesterday's industries. That is all they are, nothing more, nothing less.

Even in the South this transformation is taking place and not only among whites but among Negroes. There are many tens of thousands of Negro youths in the colleges today, and they are the ones leading the freedom struggles in the South. They are the sons of ex-GIs, men who have worked in the steel mills, on railroads, in factories, in the mines, but are determined that their children shall not follow in their footsteps.

Today the working class is so dispersed and transformed by the very nature of the changes in production that it is almost impossible to select out any single bloc of workers as working class in the old sense. Today something like 15 percent of industrial employment is in war industry—in the production of missiles, tanks, guns, rockets—and the men and women in these industries hold all kinds of positions. Some of these positions in years gone by would have classified them as middle class; some make salaries that exceed those of the executives of some corporations. The sons and daughters of yesterday's ditch-diggers are today's engineers, scientists, toolmakers, electronic specialists, nuclear physicists, school teachers, social workers, time-study men, cost-analysis experts, laboratory technicians, hospital nurses, secretaries to big executives, as well as typists, file clerks, dictaphone operators. Only the mothers and fathers are still left in those jobs which were once considered the testing ground of the pure working class. And each year these pure working-class jobs become fewer and fewer as automation moves in and takes over.

However, it is not only diversification of work that has changed the working class. The working class is growing, as Marx predicted, but it is not the old working class which the radicals persist in believing will create the revolution and establish control over production. That old working class is the vanishing herd. There are only 12 million of these production workers left in American industry, out of a total work force of 68 million. Moreover, since the Negroes were the last hired into these bottom jobs, over 30 percent of these 12 million production workers (or about 4 million) are Negroes. So the Negroes, whom the radicals do not ordinarily think of as workers, form a large proportion of this working-class force which is usually considered as the revolutionary force, while the native-born whites who have been able to move up with every change in production are less and less inside the working-class force.

By examining the history of the CIO, the industrial revolution, and unemployment, we can get some idea of the revolutionary changes that have so rapidly developed in America, directly leading to changes in the nature of work, the social composition of various strata of the population, the classes within it, and the culture of the population.

The CIO came in the 1930's. It came when the United States, which had fought in the war of 1917 and built up large-scale industry out of the technological advances of that war, was in a state of economic collapse, with over 12 million unemployed. The workers in the plant began to organize in the underground fashion which such a movement always takes before a great social reform—in the cellars, the bars, the garages; in the same way that the Abolitionists had to organize—a minority against the sentiments of the community. Involved in getting the movement under way were Communists, Socialists, wobblies, radicals of every type, along with preachers and a new layer of militant workers. Sit-down strikes erupted all over the country. All auto workers, except those of Ford, were involved, and the movement spread to allied industries.

To grasp the social significance of the CIO it must be clearly understood that the workers in taking hold in the plants did not take power. They only took hold of the plants. They did not take over the state government, or the national government, or the city police, or the National Guard, or the army. But in their struggles with the police and often with state troopers, they mobilized that section of the population which was not directly involved but which felt it also had a stake in the struggle. People from all strata of the population began to support these struggles centering around the workers and often to participate in them, both physically and financially.

It should also be clearly understood that all the workers did not act as one, nor did they all sit down as one, nor did they all join the movement as one. When the sit-down movement began in the shops, some workers stayed in while others went home and waited to see how it would all come out. The great Ford plant at River Rouge, where more workers were concentrated than in any other plant in the country, did not erupt at all. It was only four years later, in 1941, that the Ford Motor Company was brought into the union. It is necessary to realize that more workers were organized into the union than themselves spontaneously organized the union. The struggle for the union was also the battle against the scabs. There were workers who had to be forced to join by those who had seen and felt the benefits of this great social organization.

From 1935 to the entry of the United States into the war in 1941, we saw in this country the greatest period of industrial strife and workers' struggle for control of production that the United States has ever known. We saw more people than ever before become involved and interested in the labor movement as a social movement. Those who worked in the plants under a new Magna Carta of labor, the great Wagner Act, not only had a new outlook where their own lives were concerned. They also had the power to intimidate management, from the foremen up to the top echelons, forcing them to yield to workers' demands whenever production standards were in dispute. When management did not yield, the workers pulled the switches and shut down production until it did yield. So extensive was their control of production that they forced management to hire thousands and thousands of workers who would not otherwise have been hired. Yet it should be remembered that even at this point, at the height of its greatest power at the point of production, the CIO never solved the question of unemployment. It took the Second World War to put back to work the millions who had been unemployed throughout the 1930's. At the height of CIO power, we had more unemployed than we do now, both absolutely and proportionately.

The first serious contest of the CIO came in 1938 and it expressed itself in contractual language in 1939. That was when the union agreed with management to outlaw sit-downs inside the plants.¹

¹When I speak of "the union" without further qualification, I mean, unless the context indicates otherwise, the

The workers, not to be outdone by the union contract, quickly devised a new way which would later prove to be the path of opposition to both union and management. They began to walk out *without union authorization*. In 1939 and 1940, with the shadows of war hovering over Europe, the contract stated that the union would not cause or instigate sit-downs or walkouts in the plants. The NLRB was set up in Washington and then, following Pearl Harbor, the War Labor Board. The union leaders gave the government the no-strike pledge, and there followed one of the biggest debates that has ever taken place in the union over the question of whether or not the unions should abide by this pledge. Although thousands and thousands of militant workers, realizing that their newly won freedoms were being curbed, put up a protest, the CIO and all the other unions except the miners' succumbed. But throughout the war, the workers continued to wildcat over production, even though many had sons in the armed forces. It was here also that the union leaders began to use other forces from outside the unions, including members of the War Labor Board, to persuade workers to return to work for the sake of the war effort.

However, in the flux of the Second World War, the workers created inside the plants a life and a form of sociability higher than has ever been achieved by man in industrial society. For one thing, the war meant the entry into the plants of women workers, Negro workers, Southern workers, and people from all strata, including professors, artists, and radicals who would never have entered the plant before, either because of their race, sex, social status, or radical background. With the war going on, you had a social melting pot in the plant, a sharing of different social, political, cultural, and regional experiences and backgrounds.

Side by side with what was taking place in the shop there was also growing up the union organization and what is today the union bureaucracy. With only one problem at hand—to keep the workers at work—the labor leaders began to sense their power. Yesterday workers at the bench, they now sat at the table with management and with representatives from Washington. If in Washington, on the top level, Roosevelt was clearing things with Sidney² and vice versa, on the local level labor leaders with thousands of workers under their control were also feeling their oats. These labor leaders often used the radical intellectuals as advisers in strategy and tactics. They found these radicals useful in presenting a militant face to the workers. On the eve of the war, the union bureaucracy received the union shop contract which required every worker in the plant to become a member of the union. For the first time the political machine of a plant was organized by the union itself, and the company set up private rooms in the plant for union officials.

Throughout the war period the workers continued to defy the union on its no-strike pledge to the government. Thousands upon thousands of unauthorized strikes took place. (In 1943 and 1944 alone, there were 8,708 strikes involving 4 million workers.) These strikes took place over such issues as the right to smoke a cigarette (the companies for the first time were forced to allow workers in the big plants to smoke so that tobacco chewing was no longer necessary); the right of management to fire guys who were accused of sleeping on the job, or who laid off too much, or who didn't keep up with production; the right to eat on the job, read on the job, and even to cook on the job. Although workers officially had no right to strike, they achieved by these unauthorized strikes such human rights in the shop as to give them the ability to utilize their talents as never before and the opportunity to develop such an understanding of production as no group of workers in history has ever had the leisure to acquire. With the War Labor Board settling the matter of wages, the

United Automobile Workers (UAW). This union displays in clearest form the main trends and developments in the CIO as a whole, and in addition it is the union I know best from long personal experience.

²The phrase "Clear it with Sidney" originated at the Democratic Convention in 1944 when Roosevelt said labor leader Sidney Hillman should be consulted on the choice of a vice-presidential candidate.

union leadership spent most of its time at the bargaining table trying to finagle job classifications which would bring a few cents more, hoping thereby to prove to the workers that they were doing something. It was only the miners' union under John L. Lewis which officially took any position with regard to workers' rights during the war. It did this by calling the only strike of national significance, the strike which brought into the labor movement the "No Contract, No Work" slogan.

It made little difference to management, which was making record profits through the government's cost-plus contracts, how many hours workers worked or even how many workers were on the payroll. So corrupt were both union and management that a government study at Packard Motor Company revealed hundreds of workers sitting around and gambling while others worked. The workers were frozen on the job and had no way to leave unless they could harass management into firing them. So some of the more ingenious workers carried on individual wildcats, refusing to work in order to be fired, whereupon they would go to another plant for a few cents more. In this way many workers moved from job to job and saw the inside workings of many plants.

Then as suddenly as had come the war, came VJ Day. An era had ended and a new era inside the union movement began. The control of production and the human relations inside the plant which the workers had achieved were now shunted aside by the union. The struggle was shifted from the plane of relations on the job to the economic plane, where it had never been up to then. For although the coming of the CIO had meant wage increases for most workers, these increases had not been big. The average wage in the plants throughout the war was \$1.00–\$1.25 an hour. It was the long hours of work which made the paychecks big enough to meet the black market prices and the rising cost of living.

The great General Motors strike of 1945–1946 was the opening gun in the new vicious circle in which wage increases and fringe benefits would be won by the union and hailed as great social progress, only to be followed by concession of some part of the control over production which the workers had won. But flushed with the freedom they had gained inside the shop during the war, the workers almost unanimously supported the early postwar strikes for economic benefits. It was not until 1948 when the union gave management the "security clause," handing over the right to run production as it saw fit, that dissension began to spread.

Reuther had come to power in 1947 and with him a new kind of labor statesmanship which was to set a pattern for the whole CIO. Riding the crest of popularity of his "Open the Books" slogan (which he had raised as director of the 1945–1946 GM strike), Reuther pushed aside all the militants and radicals who in the sit-downs and during the war had built the UAW up into a model for the CIO. The historic escalator clause which the Trotskyites had projected and GM had rejected in 1946 was now accepted by GM. A new pattern of a sliding scale of wages was adopted which became the foundation of the union's "Sliding Scale of Socialism" strategy. The year 1948 also saw the further development of the union's Political Action Committee, whereby the schemers of the Reuther bureaucracy and the CIO leadership in general hoped to take the militancy away from the shop and focus it on the halls of Congress—to do through legislation what the workers had not done through the sit-downs, exercise political power.

In 1950 the UAW launched its historic pension scheme, and the 117-day Chrysler strike took place. In the contract which emerged from this strike, Reuther (to use one of his favorite phrases) "nailed down" a scheme for the workers to get pensions and holiday pay. It was with this contract that the workers began to realize how nailed down they really were to the company and how they were being made into a part of it. The contract evoked from the workers, particularly the younger ones who were unable to see any benefits for themselves in the pension schemes, the first serious opposition from the ranks. The pension pattern quickly spread to other unions. Again the UAW

had established itself as the model for the labor movement.

But 1950 also brought something else—the 5-year contract. GM hailed it as a guarantee of five years of industrial peace. From the workers' standpoint it was the beginning of the stalemate, and a rash of wildcats began which were to continue until the expiration of this contract and even up to the expiration of the next contract, in 1958. During these eight years, from 1950 to 1958, the workers used the wildcat as a defensive weapon to fight off encroachment on their control at the point of production, while the companies gradually wore them down with the help of the union.

During this period, management's strength began to assert itself in conjunction with the Republican administration in Washington. The economic pace of the country was beginning to slow down as Truman's "police action" in Korea was being brought to an end. But the United States was still moving from a welfare state to a warfare state: the Cold War was on, the McCarthy era was here, and the radicals and militants were on the run, pushed out by Reuther's insistence that all opponents were "parlor pinks." The Taft-Hartley Act, enacted under Truman, the friend of labor, was now being enforced by Eisenhower. Merger of the AFL-CIO to centralize labor's strength was being talked about everywhere. No one said that the CIO, which represented the most radical point yet reached by labor in the United States, was now going back to join those whose only contribution to the labor movement had been the conservatism of business unionism. All that mattered now was a bigger organization. Strength was measured by size.

The wildcat movement reached its peak in 1955. In that year the Ford and GM workers, who up to that time had more or less supported the Reuther machine, believing that thereby they were supporting unionism, erupted in nation-wide wildcats while Reuther was still celebrating the "Guaranteed Annual Wage" contract (which was to turn out to be only a supplementary unemployment benefit). The wildcatters all over the country raised the slogan of "Specific Local Grievances" and forced the union to give them the right to local strikes over these grievances. For the first time Reuther and his associates were really scared. They had been warned by the workers that control of the machine was one thing and control over the workers quite another, that a contract between the union and the company is not necessarily a contract between the workers and the company.

However, a new force had now entered the picture, a force which the union had given up its claim to control when in 1948 it yielded to management the sole right to run production as it saw fit. With the decline again of auto production after the Korean War, and with the signing of the 1955 contract, management began introducing automation at a rapid rate.

Automation is a change in the mode of production which is more radical than any since the introduction of the assembly line. But unlike the assembly line, which was to increase the manufacturing work force over what it had been, automation is an advanced form of technology which replaces individual human controls with electronic controls. What had already happened to the coal miners with the mechanization of the mines was now catching up with the CIO in chemicals, rubber, steel, glass, autos, machinery, etc.

As the companies began to step up their pressure for higher job standards from the workers, the union itself began to try to persuade the workers that automation would provide more jobs for them. Caught squarely between the union contract and the company, the workers continued to wildcat against every attempt to reduce the work force, but each time they were forced to return by the union officials. New plants with new automated machinery began to spring up all over the country. The work force in the old plants was broken up, scattered to the new plants. Thus the machine shop work which had been done by 1,800 at the old Chrysler-Jefferson plant was now being done by 596 in the new Trenton, Michigan, plant which supplies not only the old plant with

machined parts but all the other plants of the corporation. Layoffs followed by the hundreds as more was being produced not only by the new automated machinery but by forcing workers to tend more of the old machines—man-o-mation. With the building into the automated machines of more controls, thus reducing or eliminating breakdowns, even skilled workers were no longer needed for repair work.

The workers wildcatted, held meetings of their locals, voted not to work overtime, all in an attempt to stem the tide. But the union continued to send them back, and so the layoffs continued, reaching into every section of the plant, and including office workers, time-keepers, and paymasters. As the office workers found their places taken by IBM machines and computers, high-heeled and silk-frocked women began to join the production workers on the picket line.

Finally, after 137 wildcats at U.S. Rubber in one year and 700 wildcats in the Chrysler plants in three years, the union agreed with the company that any worker who wildcats should be first warned and then summarily dismissed. That put an end to wildcatting. Then came what was for all practical purposes the end of the union when, in 1958, under the pressure of the company and for a period of four months, the union insisted that the workers continue on the job without a contract. Meanwhile, the company introduced new work standards when and how it pleased, daring the union to strike. When the 1958 contract was finally signed, there were few workers in the plant who did not realize they had returned to fully company-controlled plants. Time-study men and work layout specialists roamed the plants like sniffing bloodhounds, spying, taking pictures, watching over the workers' shoulders, while the shamed union representatives hid behind pillars or in the toilets.

The cooling-off period which the union had devised in the 1955 strike over local grievances was now in full contract effect. After a certain number of workers' grievances had been accumulated, a strike vote could be taken. Then a 60-day wait was in order. Then, if the International Board considered the grievances worth a strike, a strike might be held, etc., etc. Meanwhile, the company was free to keep the work standard in effect and get out all its production.

So ridiculous has the union become as a workers' organization that in 1958 when the contract with Chrysler was being ratified on a Sunday, the union authorized the workers to take a strike vote on the next day.

Once again the workers devised a method to hit back, but this time not against the company. In December, 1958, the unemployed began to picket both the plant and the union against overtime. When this happened, the union, in cooperation with the company and the courts, saw to it that a ruling was handed down that any picketing by the unemployed of a plant is in violation of the contract. Not satisfied with this outlawing of actions by its unemployed members, the union at its next convention decided that unemployed workers could only retain their membership and the right to vote if they reported to the local union during the last ten days of each month. Thus the union has itself drawn the line between the employed and the unemployed. Today unemployed workers march around the Chrysler plants protesting overtime, but the union does not allow them to do so during hours when the workers are actually going into the plant. They may only march when the workers are already inside working.

All that is now left to the workers is the picketing of the union itself.

From 1955 until today the workers have made it absolutely clear that man does not live by bread alone. They have insisted that the question of wage raises or money benefits in any form is not what concerns them but rather the conditions of work in the shop. In 1961 the union bureaucracy negotiated new contracts with the "Big Three" and American Motors. If you take the word of the workers themselves, you will see that not one of the issues that they consider the major ones was settled by the new contracts. The overtime which they insisted must go and the shorter work

week they wanted have been tossed out the window. In fact, before the ink was dry on the new contracts and before the workers had even ratified them, the plants were scheduling six days a week, ten hours a day. Not only was nothing done to improve working conditions. Management now had another three-year contract under which it can legally pursue the merciless speed-up and intimidation which have been developing since 1955. Even the small representation of stewards and committeemen which workers retained at Chrysler has been reduced. At American Motors wash-up time has been cut out. Faced with the question of unemployment and accepting it as permanent, the union has now embarked on an all-out program to ease as many workers out of the plant as possible, through severance pay, pensions, increased unemployment benefits. At the same time, it is pushing a profit-sharing plan to incorporate those still left in the plant into management itself. When American Motors workers made it clear that they didn't want the profit-sharing plan, the union manufactured a new definition of democracy: the holding of one election after another until the workers vote the way the union wants them to vote. Joining hand in hand with management, it conducted an intensive educational program to brainwash the workers into line. At General Motors, where local union after local union, with the Pittsburgh local in the lead, refused to go back to work until their local grievances had been settled, the International simply brought all dissident local officers to Detroit where, together with management, it whipped them into line. In the Chrysler set-up, where the Twinsburg, Ohio, stamping plant is the key to continued production, the International came to a settlement with the company over the *unanimous* opposition of the entire local bargaining committee.

The UAW is just one union among the major CIO unions. But it has been considered the most advanced, the most progressive, the model of the labor movement that arose in the 1930's. If this is what the UAW has done, it is not difficult to imagine the state of the other CIO unions which failed to reach the heights of militancy and social advancement of the UAW.

Thus, after 25 years, the UAW has given back to management every right over production won in the movement of the 1930's and the war years. Today the workers are doing in eight hours the actual physical work they used to do in twelve. At 6:30, a half hour before the day shift begins, you can see workers setting up their operations so that they will not fall behind during the hours for which they are paid. They are afraid to go to the toilet, to get a drink of water, to take time off to go to the funeral of a relative. If they refuse to work overtime, they are written up and sent home on a regular working day. They are afraid to walk around with a newspaper in their pockets for fear that they will be accused of reading on the job. Whenever the company wishes to work the men more than 40 hours a week, all it has to do is "schedule" overtime. Here is an example of how "scheduling" works: Recently a worker at one of the Chrysler plants refused to work through lunch when asked to do so by the foreman. The foreman took him to Labor Relations. The Labor Relations man asked the foreman, "Did you tell him the work was scheduled or did you just ask him to work?" The foreman replied that he had only asked the worker to work. Whereupon the Labor Relations man said, "Next time tell him the work is scheduled, and then if he refuses you can fire him because we have the sole right to schedule production as we see fit."

Anyone listening and talking to workers in the auto plants today can tell that the workers are through with the union. In the early days of the union, the most common expression in the shop was, "Now that we have a union we don't have to take a lot of the stuff that we used to take." Now the expression is, "When we had a union we didn't have to take this stuff." For over four years now it has been obvious that the workers themselves have drawn the curtain on the era of the union.

When the situation has reached such a stage, all questions of what the union should have done or could have done, or what some other leaders might have done or should have done, or

what might have been achieved if some other policy had been followed—all these questions become completely irrelevant and abstract. To continue to think in such terms is to repeat the mistake that the Trotskyites made for thirty years as they tried to formulate an alternative policy and leadership for Stalin, while Stalin himself was going ahead and building not only the Russian bureaucracy but a Russia which no longer bears any resemblance to the Russia of 1917.

The end of the CIO is not necessarily due to the advent of automation, although it is automation which has made clear its helplessness. It is due to the fact that all organizations that spring up in a capitalist society and do not take absolute power, but rather fight only on one tangential or essential aspect of that society are eventually incorporated into capitalist society. *The fact, the key to the present situation, is that from the beginning the union did not take absolute control away from the capitalists.* There was no revolution, no destruction of the state power. The union itself has therefore become incorporated into all the contradictions of the capitalist system and is today fulfilling the same functions for the American state as the Russian trade unions do for the Russian state.

But what about the experiences that the organized workers have had in the last 25 years and what is going to happen to the workers who were organized into the CIO, now that automation has arrived and the assembly-line system and mass production by mass production workers are coming to an end as the typical mode of production?

First of all, these workers have undoubtedly made certain very substantial gains not only for themselves but for society, as all workers have who have carried on the class struggle.

The CIO movement gave the American public its first real taste of class consciousness and social thinking, establishing in the American mind for the first time the idea of democracy on the job, in the factories, the offices, and every place where people work. The whole idea of human relations at work, which has since become the subject of innumerable studies by industrial relations experts, is the product of this movement. The CIO, in conjunction with the war and the activities of the Negroes themselves, established a framework within which Negroes could fight for equality inside the plant. It has done the same for women workers. Over the years it has provided a focal point for the energies of tens of thousands of idealistically minded young people who found in the labor movement a cause that they could serve. The theory that America has a class structure, so long disputed, was finally recognized after the CIO was organized. It was the CIO movement, and following it the Second World War, which established the production worker as a citizen of American society rather than just a beast of burden.

But the question is: What is going to happen to the workers who established these values now that automation is cutting so sharply into their ranks? What is going to happen to the steel, auto, rubber, aircraft, coal workers, who are today the vanishing herd? This is a burning question, not only to these workers themselves but to all who for so long have looked to these workers to save American society as a whole.

These workers will not just fade away, although their numbers will be constantly diminishing both relatively to the rest of the working population and absolutely as older workers die or are pensioned off and no replacements are hired. Those who remain have undergone a very rich economic experience. They are not only educated in the meaning and nature of modern production, but through this they have acquired a certain wit which they will use to evolve tactics of self-defense, prolonging their tenure as long as possible. They have also had a very rich political experience—with the union, with management, and with the government—from which they can draw as they join other strata of the workers in the struggles which will inevitably develop as the pressure is transferred to these new workers. But above all, they have learned a great lesson for all future

workers: the lesson that those in whom they put their trust to serve them have wound up as their masters. From now on these workers are going to fight these new masters every step of the way, sometimes advancing, sometimes retreating, but always antagonistic. Their fights will clarify for the new revolutionary forces what a struggle entails.

But what about all the unemployed? What will society do about them? This would be one question if we were talking about a socialist society. It is another question when we are talking about a capitalist society, which is what the United States is today. The capitalists will take care of them. The capitalists, you say? Aren't they the most inhuman people on earth? Aren't they the ones whom these workers have been fighting tooth and nail all the time?

Here is one of the greatest contradictions of capitalism itself. Today the capitalists have to feed these untouchables instead of being fed by them. Faced with an economic crisis or industrial change, as after a war or when a new mode of production is introduced or when the market is glutted with goods, the first thing that the capitalists say is, "We have a cushion." What is the cushion? It is the very thing that these capitalists refused to give for so long and which the workers forced them to yield only by long and bitter struggles—social security, pensions, severance pay, unemployment benefits, supplementary unemployment benefits, charity, welfare. But the capitalists are not going to pay for these, you say. You are so right. The workers have paid and are still paying for them.

Today over 100,000 UAW workers are on pension—the product of the new method of silent firing which the companies have devised to get rid of one set of workers without having to hire new ones. Even more coal miners, steel workers, rubber workers, iron ore workers, railway workers, have been eased out in this way. In fact, the railroads have made the process clearest of all. They will hire no new firemen, they say, but those still working can continue to ride like dummies in the cabs until it is time for them to retire. In the auto shops one of the methods of silent firing involves the use of the physical rating code. Workers are required to take a physical examination each year and are coded accordingly. Any worker over 60 who cannot keep up with production is forced to retire on the basis of physical fitness. Those under 60 are laid off, draw unemployment benefits until they are exhausted, and then go on social security disability.

What about those millions of unemployed who have never been called back to work and have exhausted their compensation? Well, the government can periodically extend compensation a few weeks longer whenever it fears these unemployed may be getting desperate, and then finally there is welfare, where the bulk of them wind up. But won't this cost the state, the country, the city, the manufacturers a lot of money to take care of all these people? But the people pay for that also, through taxes on those still working. It is among these taxpayers that the tempo of revolt is accelerating.

What about the young people to whom the doors of industry are closed because there are no more semi-skilled jobs and because they have not been trained for the new technical jobs? There is always the mass army, the mass peacetime army which, like automation, we didn't have in the United States in earlier periods. This army, the biggest peacetime army in the world, is the modern equivalent of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's. It is the place where a part of the unemployed youth are now regularly dumped and where periodically even some of the employed are transferred in order to make room for others to take their jobs. Only now it is not civilian, it conserves nothing, and it is paid for out of the taxes of those still working and excludes the most handicapped and underprivileged—the illiterate and the physically unfit.

It is clear that this growing army of the permanently unemployed is the ultimate crisis of the American bourgeoisie. But the American bourgeoisie is a powerful bourgeoisie, and it will take every step in its power to moderate, cajole, temper the revolution which this condition will undoubtedly

provoke. It is also clear that the most organized workers in this country, the members of the old unionized strata, the vanishing herd of production workers, have learned that in the actions they will take or may take from now on, they will have to be joined by other forces. Today, the problem of control over production and the solution of their specific local grievances will have to be dealt with by larger sections of the population. These are now, more than ever before, questions which require the taking on of the union, the city government, the state government, and the national government. That these workers can or may revolt is not the question. Even one worker can revolt. But workers are not fools. They want to win sometimes too, and this is true of American workers more than of any other workers in the world. When they struggle, they like to know that they can achieve some immediate success. And understanding the structure of society as they do, they know they are going to have to join with others in order to win. They will have to move on a scale of revolt powerful enough to smash the union, the company, and the state which, under the guise of national security and national defense, denounces every move they make on their own behalf as irresponsible and irreconcilable with the system itself.

Why don't they take over their own organization, their union? Looking backwards, one will find that side by side with the fight to control production, has gone the struggle to control the union, and that the decline has taken place simultaneously on both fronts. As the company regained control of production through bargaining with the union and through automation, the workers have been losing control of the union. So that just as the workers today know that they have to challenge more than the plant management for control over production, so they know that merely taking over the union today would gain them very little. Historically, workers move ahead by the new. *That is, they bypass existing organizations and form new ones uncorrupted by past habits and customs.* In the 1930's the workers did not take over the AFL. They formed the CIO, a new organization, adapted to the new forms of industrial struggle. It is also significant that when the AFL and the CIO finally joined together in 1955 with the aim of strengthening the American labor movement, they did not become stronger but rather declined in numerical membership and influence. Millions of workers in the South have never been organized by the unions and never will be because the unions no longer have the social power to overcome the resistance of the Southern industrialists who control the local sheriffs, judges, police, politicians, and agents of the federal government. Millions of unemployed have been run out of the unions because they are afraid that these unemployed may explode in some action that would disrupt the cooperation between union and management. Thus with every day more people who can be classified as workers are outside the labor organizations than inside them.

Chapter 2: The Challenge of Automation

Since 1955 and the advent of automation, overtime has been detrimental to the workers. Again and again workers have been faced with the decision to work overtime or not to work overtime, and the decision has usually been: "To hell with those out of work. Let's get the dollar while the dollar is gettable." The amazing thing is that this has nothing to do with the backwardness of these workers. Not only can they run production and think for themselves, but they sense and feel the changes in conditions way in advance of those who are supposed to be responsible for their welfare. But with all these abilities there is one big organic weakness. Over and over again workers in various shops and industries, faced with a critical issue, only divide and become disunited, even though they are well aware that they are being unprincipled and weakening their own cause as workers. Since the advent of automation there has not been any serious sentiment for striking, particularly if

the strike was going to come at the expense of material things that the workers already had in their possession, like cars, refrigerators, TV sets, etc. They were not ready to make any serious sacrifices of these; they would rather sacrifice the issue. Between the personal things and the issue, they have chosen the personal. Most American workers have geared themselves to a standard of living that is based on a five-day week *plus*—either in the form of overtime or another job, part or full time. And any time this standard of living is threatened, it is a personal crisis, which means that more and more decisions are being personalized and individualized rather than collectivized and socialized.

What then happens to the class struggle? At this point the class consciousness of the workers tends to shift from what has traditionally been considered its main quality, hostility to the class enemy outside, and to focus on antagonisms, struggles, conflicts among the workers themselves. Fights among the workers begin to sharpen, although they no longer take the form they did in the 30's when the workers were divided by race and nationality prejudices ("Dagoes," "Wops," "Polacks," "Niggers," "Buffaloes," etc.). The division is now between two groupings. On one side are the brown-noses, stooges, and workers who are only looking out for themselves, those who are complacent because of the fringe benefits they assume they have won through the union, particularly those near to retirement, and those who would revolt but are afraid of the union bureaucracy or of being fired and then forgotten or branded as "nuisances" and "troublemakers." On the other side are those who emphasize issues, who raise a cry about rights, who call upon workers to make decisions on principles and issues. Among the latter are the unemployed who picketed the union for agreeing to overtime work and who continue to picket the plants against overtime even at the risk of being considered nuisances and troublemakers by those inside the shop, showing that the only ones who are seriously concerned about unemployment today are the unemployed themselves.

Yet these same workers who call the principled ones "nuisances" know exactly what their own chances are. In the average auto plant today, for example, ex-foremen make up nearly one third of the work force. Although these ex-foremen know they'll never get back on supervision, they still keep hoping and trying to make an impression on the bosses by their work. The same thing is true of a lot of other workers. They know that the speed-up is going to get worse and worse, but they continue to keep up with it rather than sacrifice a few days' pay to show the company how much they resent it. Instead they take the easy way out and blame it on the union. It is true that contract-wise the union has made all this possible. But at a certain point the union simply becomes an excuse, a pretext for not taking a stand on issues. The sell-out that has taken place in the contract between the union and the company does not change the fact of the corruption that has taken place in the workers.

These struggles among the old workers, which are creating such antagonisms among them, are really only delaying tactics on the part of the old herd. They do not touch the real question. It is automation which is the reality facing them and everybody in American society today. America today is headed towards an automated society, and it cannot be stopped by featherbedding, by refusal to work overtime, by sabotage, or by shortening the work week by a few hours. America today is rapidly reaching the point where, in order to defend the warfare state and the capitalist system, there will be automation on top of automation. The dilemma before the workers and the American people is: *How can we have automation and still earn our livings?* It is not simply a question of retraining or changing from one form of work to another. For automation definitely eliminates the need for a vast number of workers, including skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, and middle-class clerical workers.

It is quite obvious that the attitudes and relations to their work of the new strata of workers who are already deeply involved in automation, are different from those of the old workers. It is these

new relations to their work which have already made it impossible for the union to organize these new workers or for the old herd of workers to establish any relation to the new workers. The old workers regard the new ones as close to management and as part and parcel of the process which is eliminating them. The union can only approach these new workers in terms of economic demands or job classifications. But their salaries are high enough so that they are not concerned about a few cents more an hour. They start at salaries much higher than the old skilled workers ever dreamed of attaining. But they do not think like the old skilled workers in terms of job classifications. Not at all. Rather they welcome constant changes in production as a challenge to their ability, knowledge, and ingenuity. Automation to them is as fascinating as going to school and tackling new problems every day. This interest in their work also makes them quite unconscious of the effect that their work is having on the old workers. But there is more than that. These new workers are not like the old inventor-geniuses who were hired by the company only so that their brains could be picked (e.g. as Henry Ford hired George Washington Carver at the peak of his abilities). These new workers are part and parcel of the new *process* of production, and at the same time their ideas are so crucial to the direction of the work that they are inseparable from management and the organization of the work. In their attitude to work and in the process of their work they have invaded management to the point of actually controlling the flow of production itself. But at the same time, in much the same way as the semi-skilled workers of the CIO era failed to seize political control, these new workers are leaving the political direction of their work, the purposes for which it is intended, to the old management. And because they lack any experience of struggle, even in getting their jobs, it is unlikely that any initiative for political struggle will come from them. Yet they are the new work force coming into a position of strategic power in production at a time when all the social problems of American society are being posed.

Automation replaces men. This of course is nothing new. What is new is that now, unlike most earlier periods, the displaced men have nowhere to go. The farmers displaced by mechanization of the farms in the 20's could go to the cities and man the assembly lines. As for the work animals like the mule, they could just stop growing them. But automation displaces people, and you don't just stop growing people even when they have been made expendable by the system. Under Stalin the kulaks and all those who didn't go along with the collectivization of agriculture were just killed off. Even then, if they had been ready to go along, Stalin could have used them. But in the United States, with automation coming in when industry has already reached the point that it can supply consumer demand, the question of what to do with the surplus people who are the expendables of automation becomes more and more critical every day.

Many liberals and Marxists say that they should be used to build schools and hospitals and be sent to foreign countries to aid in their development. But such a proposal has as its premise that this is a socialist society when it is in fact a capitalist society, and what motivates a capitalist society primarily is the return on its investment.

There is only a limited number of these old workers whom capitalism can continue to employ in production at a pace killing enough to be profitable. The rest are like the refugees or displaced persons so familiar in recent world history. There is no way for capitalism to employ them profitably, yet it can't just kill them off. It must feed them rather than be fed by them. Growing in numbers all the time, these displaced persons have to be maintained, becoming a tremendous drain on the whole working population, and creating a growing antagonism between those who have jobs and those who do not. This antagonism in the population between those who have to be supported and those who have to support them is one of the inevitable antagonisms of capitalism. And it is this antagonism, brought to a climax by automation, which will create one of the deepest crises for

capitalism in our age. In this crisis one section of the population will be pitted against another, not only the employed against the unemployed but those who propose that the unemployed be allowed to starve to death rather than continue as such a drain on the public against those who cannot stand by and see society degenerate into such barbarism. On both sides there will be members of all strata of the population.

Thus automation not only poses the questions of poverty and employment and related economic questions. It brings into sharp focus that element which the Negroes always bring with them when they struggle for their rights. It makes the question social because it poses the relations of man to man.

As automation spreads, it will intensify the crises of capitalism and sharpen the conflicts among the various sections of the population, particularly between those working and those not working, those paying taxes and those not paying taxes. Out of this conflict will grow a counter-revolutionary movement made up of those from all social layers who resent the continued cost to them of maintaining these expendables but who are determined to maintain the system that creates and multiplies the number of expendables. This in turn will mobilize those who begin by recognizing the right of these displaced persons to live, and from there are forced to struggle for a society in which there are no displaced persons.

Thus automation is that stage of production which carries the contradictions of capitalism to their furthest extreme, creating and sharpening inside capitalist society the conflicts, antagonisms, clashes between people that make for social progress and the inevitable struggle that goes with it.

The fact has to be faced. Automation is the greatest revolution that has taken place in human society since men stopped hunting and fishing and started to grow their own food. It is capable of displacing as many productive workers from the work force as have been brought into the work force since the invention of the automobile at the beginning of this century. (Today an estimated one out of every six American workers depends, directly or indirectly, on the auto industry for employment.) In fact, so devastating would be the immediate effects if automation were introduced at one fell swoop that those who would appear to benefit most from it (the capitalists) are as afraid of its introduction as the workers threatened with displacement.

Up to now the Marxists have more or less gone along with the old herd of semi-skilled and skilled workers who have resisted automation, at the same time reassuring themselves that private capitalists themselves would not have sufficient capital to go all out for automation. What they have failed to recognize is that it is not private capital as such which is introducing automation. The great bulk of the capital invested in automation today comes from the government and is paid for by every member of the American population, whether he is a worker, a member of the middle class, or rich. This is all done in the name of research and defense, but, whatever it is called, the benefits are as great to the capitalists as if they had put out the capital themselves. Thus the capitalists have found a way to get around the high cost of automation as well as the high cost of scrapping still productive machinery.

One of the major aims of the Kennedy administration is to encourage automation, by granting subsidies to companies who go full-speed ahead on it, both directly and in the form of tax write-offs. Therefore, when workers fight the introduction of automation, they are not only taking on private capitalism but the federal government itself. Yet so great is the contradiction generated by automation that the government, while giving it such encouragement, must at the very same time set up a new committee to study what is going to happen to the millions of displaced workers.

There is continual talk of new training programs. Yet those making these suggestions know that training is not the answer. In the very period when individuals are being trained, new machinery

is being introduced which eliminates the need for such training. Take, for example, the draftsman. With the old methods the engineer used to present his ideas to a draftsman who would make a rough sketch of these ideas which would then be given to another draftsman to refine. A third draftsman then drew the final blueprint, incorporating in it the exact size, the appearance, and the correct fittings to the millionth of an inch. Today all that this same engineer has to do is talk his ideas into a tape recorder which plays into a computer and the ideas are transformed into a design; the design in turn is fed into a developer and, once developed, can be handed over to the work foreman for building. The three draftsmen have been eliminated from the work process, and only the engineer and the toolmaker remain, each having to know more than before about the other's job.

Marxists have continued to think of a mass of workers always remaining as the base of an industrialized society. They have never once faced the fact that capitalist society could develop to the point of not needing a mass of workers. But this is the dilemma of our time in the United States, and as of now only for the United States. The question before Americans is whether to be for the technological revolutions of automation despite all the people who will be displaced, or to be opposed to this advance, sticking with the old workers who are resisting the new machinery, as workers have done traditionally since the invention of the spinning jenny.

When Marx was writing in the middle of the 19th century, he was dealing with the most advanced countries of his day. But even these countries were underdeveloped in the sense that the great bulk of the people were still engaged in farm work. A large part of the labor force was still needed to produce the foodstuffs for people to eat and the raw materials (e.g. cotton) for industry.

Today if you told the average worker in a big American city that he ought to go back to the farm, he would give you all kinds of arguments. The only reason why he might go back is to get away from the Bomb. He wouldn't think of going back in order to make a contribution to society in the way of production. He knows enough about the food that is rotting in the warehouses and the taxes he has to pay to store it. He knows enough about the great change that has taken place in the technology of farm production so that farm work is no longer socially necessary for the great majority of people.

But as yet few people have been ready to face the fact that, with automation and cybernation, we are reaching the stage where work in the factory is also no longer going to be socially necessary for the great majority. It is easy to accept that a man should move from one form of labor to another form, but it is hard to accept that there will no longer be a mass demand for *any* labor. It is so taken for granted that the production of goods is man's fundamental role in society that, even when technology is making this unnecessary, most people from the politicians and economists down to the man in the street still try to dream up schemes that will require a lot of people to play a material productive role.

Yet, unless the Bomb falls and throws what is left of mankind back to the stage of hunting and fishing, society can't go backward technologically. Once man has gone on from the stage of hunting and fishing to that of agriculture, it makes no sense for him to go back to hunting and fishing as a means of making his livelihood. If man no longer needs to drive a mule in order to live, you just can't make him drive a mule. Why then should people keep looking for work in order to justify their right to live if there is no longer a social and economic need for them to work?

Marx envisaged a long period of industrialization during which the number of workers would be constantly growing. He believed that in the course of the conflict between labor and capital in the productive process, a new force would be created with human values of organization, cooperation, and discipline, in sharp contrast with the individualism, competition, and greed of the capitalists.

This new force he called “socialized labor” and he said that it was the new society growing up within the old.

In this country during the 30’s Marx’s perspectives were realized to an astonishing degree in the organization of the CIO. The work force had grown in numbers to meet the needs of the mass industrial production, and now came its co-operation, organization, discipline, and revolt. True, this work force did not actually take over power from the capitalists, but in the crisis of the Depression the pressures it exerted compelled the capitalists to establish the Welfare State with many of the social benefits that Marx had advocated.

That was a generation ago. Today when automation and cybernation are shrinking rather than expanding the work force, many people still think in the same terms. They still assume that the majority of the population will be needed to produce material goods and that the production of such goods will still remain the heart of society. They have not been able to face the fact that even if the workers took over the plants they would also be faced with the problem of what to do with themselves now that work is becoming socially unnecessary. They have not been able to face this fact because they have no clear idea of what people would do with themselves, what would be their human role, or how society would be organized when work is no longer at the heart of society.

I don’t think Marx would have had any difficulty in facing this fact if he were living today. Marx saw more clearly than anybody that men’s ideas are determined by the stage of production. However, Marx is dead and one cannot continue to quote him as an all-time solution for social problems brought on by the development of production. A new theory must be evolved and it is likely to meet as much opposition as Marx’s has met.

Chapter 3: The Classless Society

The United States is a Warfare State.

The United States is an inseparable part of Western Civilization.

The United States is the citadel of world capitalism today.

The basic philosophy with which all radicals have approached the analysis of the United States has been centered around what the workers would do, ought to do, would have to do, etc., usually ignoring the power of the state and the bureaucracy which are today such an essential part of American capitalism; ignoring the fact that when Marx wrote 100 years ago, and even up to 30 years ago, there was no mass standing army, navy, and air force, and no universal draft in this country; and sometimes realizing but more often forgetting that their own ideas are shaped by no less a fact than that they themselves are by-products of Western Civilization.

Today this philosophy is at the crossroads. The emerging nations of Asia and Africa, which have all these years been dominated by a little corner of the globe known as Western Civilization, are clashing head-on with that civilization. The Marxists themselves, who have done very little since the time of Marx to understand the rest of the globe, merely pigeonholing it in their minds as colonial and semi-colonial, must now do some serious re-evaluating.

American Marxists, like Marxists all over the world, believe in Karl Marx’s ideology. They believe, first, that capitalist production and capitalist society are organized for the benefit of the capitalists and against the masses; and second, that at a certain stage in the development of capitalism, the people living under it will be forced to revolt against it because their conditions will become intolerable and because there will grow up inside this society the embryo of a socialist society, united, disciplined, and organized by capitalist production itself.

In America, the Marxists have found their role more challenging than in any other place on the

globe. For inside this country are all the necessary material ingredients which could make socialism possible, and yet it all seems so remote.

It is not a question of whether socialism can or cannot be imported. It is only the specific conditions of a country at a particular time that make people struggle. The fundamental point is that it is impossible for an American Marxist movement to build itself on the ideas of mass poverty and the abolition of private property which have played such an important role in the development of the European Marxist movements. This alone makes the challenge to American Marxist groups more severe than in any other country. For although the poverty-caused misery of the American masses has by no means been eliminated, it is so dispersed and scattered among various segments of the population that it does not constitute a fundamental and unifying issue to mobilize the masses of the people in struggle.

Thus the question, "What is socialism?" finds the American Marxists constantly seeking a new formula to fit in with the ever-changing conditions of the country. So that today when one asks an American Marxist point-blank, "What is socialism and why should the people struggle for it?" he is baffled and has to fumble around for an answer.

Marx in the 19th century said that there would have to be a transitional society between the class society of *capitalism* and the classless society of *communism*. This transitional society, which he called *socialism*, would still be a class society but instead of the capitalists being the ruling class, the workers would rule. It was this rule by the workers which, for Marx, would make the society socialist. As the ruling class, the workers would then develop the productive forces to the stage where there could be all-around development of each individual and the principle of "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" could be realized. At this point there could be the classless society or communism.

In the United States the forces of production have already been developed to the point where there could be the classless society which Marx said could come only under communism. Yet ever since the Russian Revolution, all kinds of socialists have differentiated themselves from the Communists in terms of political policy and political organization but have never tackled this question of Marxist theory that socialism is just a transitional society on the way to communism and that only under communism can there be a classless society.

How have the revolutionary socialists arrived at just being for socialism while still claiming to be Marxists? The turning point was the Russian Revolution. If the Russians had never won the revolution, socialism and communism, with communism as the ultimate goal, would have remained a part of Marxist ideology, and Marxist organizations all over the world could have kept on struggling against capitalism without having to clarify what they were struggling for.

It was after the Russian Revolution and on the basis of examining what emerged from it that American Marxists began to split and decline. They were always splitting over the question of the correct policy for the socialist, i.e. the workers' state in Russia—instead of advancing their theory to keep step with the advances of capitalism which, in the United States in particular, were creating the productive forces to make possible a struggle far beyond what was possible in Russia. They tried to make the Russian blueprint fit the United States when the United States was developing productivity to the point where the workers, through economic, political, and social pressure but without political power, were deriving from capitalism the economic benefits which elsewhere the workers would have had to take political power in order to achieve.

What then is still lacking in the United States where capitalism has achieved its highest form? What is it that the American people want, which they find lacking in capitalism, and which will mobilize them to fight against capitalism and for another society, call it what you will?

A social revolution in the United States has to mean control of production by the producers. A social revolution in the United States has to mean production for the use of those who need it. But beyond these goals the social revolution in the United States has to mean the classless society—a society in which the antagonisms and divisions between classes, races, and people of different national backgrounds are eliminated and people can develop among themselves civilized and cooperative relations, relations which are possible today as never before because there need no longer be any problem of scarcity of material goods and services. All the problems of scarcity which up to now have required the exploitation of various races and immigrant groupings have now been outmoded by the technological advances of production.

The horizons which the social revolution in America open up are more tremendous than anywhere else in the world. But the path which the revolution will have to take in this country is also more difficult and vicious than anywhere else in the world. First of all, it is the Warfare State with its huge forces which has to be challenged. And second, inside each American, from top to bottom, in various degrees, has been accumulated all the corruption of a class society which has achieved its magnificent technological progress first and always by exploiting the Negro race, and then by exploiting the immigrants of all races. At the same time the class society has constantly encouraged the exploited to attempt to rise out of their class and themselves become exploiters of other groupings and finally of their own people. The struggle to rid themselves and each other of this accumulated corruption is going to be more painful and violent than any struggles over purely economic grievances have been or are likely to be.

Chapter 4: The Outsiders

Many people in the United States are aware that, with automation, enough could be easily produced in this country so that there would be no need for the majority of Americans to work. But the right to live has always been so tied up with the necessity to produce that it is hard for the average person to visualize a workless society. The result is that when people face the perspective of their jobs being eliminated by automation, all they can think of is learning a new trade or a new profession, hoping that in this way they can maintain their right to live.

As long as this country was in the situation that most underdeveloped countries are in today, it was natural to tie together the right to live with the ability to produce. But when a country reaches the stage that this country has now reached, productivity can no longer be the measure of an individual's right to life. When you travel around this country and see new automated plants springing up in one area after another, it becomes apparent that the era when man had to earn his right to live through work is rapidly drawing to a close. Within a few years, man as a productive force will be as obsolete as the mule.

It is in this serious light that we have to look at the question of the growing army of unemployed. We have to stop looking for solutions in pump-priming, featherbedding, public works, war contracts, and all the other gimmicks that are always being proposed by labor leaders and well-meaning liberals. Nor is there any solution through production to aid the underdeveloped countries. Perhaps this would be a possibility if we lived in a world society where the whole world was working in a unified way to advance the welfare of all. But the fact is that we are living in a nation-state society in which millions of dollars worth of goods rot away unless they can be used abroad to further the foreign policy of this particular nation-state.

So there is no way to avoid facing the fundamental problems. What we need today is a new Declaration of Human Rights to fit the new Age of Abundance.

This nation cannot long endure short on rights and long on goods. We must accept the plain fact that we are moving towards an automated society and act on the basis of this fact.

The first principle that has to be established is that everyone has a right to a full life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, whether he is working or not. The question of the right to a full life has to be divorced completely from the question of work.

Society must recognize that the magnificent productive tools of our day are the result of the accumulated labors of all of us and not the exclusive property of any group or class. Now that our productive machinery has been developed to the point that it can do the tasks which have heretofore been done by men, everyone, regardless of class, regardless of background, is entitled to the enjoyment of the fruits of that development, just as all men are entitled to warm themselves in the heat of the sun.

Once it is recognized that all men have the right to a full life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, whether they are working or not working, have worked or have not worked, it will be necessary for society to create a completely new set of values. Up to now, because productivity has been low, a man's value has been determined by his labor from day to day, by how much he could produce both to sustain himself and to permit investment in new machinery. Now that man is being eliminated from the productive process, a new standard of value must be found. This can only be man's value as a human being.

Up to now it has always been possible if not always easy to cast aside the productive forces that have become obsolete. Work animals were put to pasture; tools, machinery, factories, and even whole industries have been simply scrapped or put to the torch. It has been said that capitalism wages wars so that it can get rid of surplus manpower that has become obsolete. Whether or not this has been true in the past, no capitalist in these days of nuclear warfare would be foolish enough to take this way out. The key question therefore is what should be done with man who is being made obsolete by the new stage of production. Obviously no ordinary solution is possible. This is the social dilemma of our time.

No one understands better than a worker the humiliation and sense of personal degradation that is involved when some big shot is coming through the shop and the superintendent tells him to "look busy" in order to prove that there is useful work going on. That is what our whole society is like today. By all kinds of gimmicks—including war work, which may end up by killing off those for whom jobs are being created, and a host of government agencies set up to study the problems of "full employment"—the American government is now trying to make work when we are already on the threshold of a workless society.

In the fall of 1961 as Chrysler workers were streaming out of the plant, they were telling one another: "This could be a long strike because the company don't need us at all. They got plenty of cars in storage." That these workers practically to a man felt this way is a sign of the work situation in the United States, not only in the auto plants but in the TV plants, appliance plants, the furniture industry, the clothing industry, and in every domestic industry. It is a known fact that one single auto company like GM or Ford, or a single refrigerator company like General Electric or Westinghouse, or any major steel firm like U. S. Steel or Bethlehem, could produce enough so that all their competitors could close down. All they would have to do is bring in a little more automation and cybernation (automation plus computers). What they are doing today is "competing" with one another and splitting up the profit. Only in war work, and particularly in missiles, can workers feel sure that if they go on strike they will be missed. *This* is the dilemma of the United States: What is to be done with the men and women who are being made obsolete by the new stage of production?

The American economy is kept going today by the pump-priming of war contracts. This kind of

work produces no goods that will reach the consumer market, because what is produced is blown up or stored—some of it at the bottom of the sea. However, by this means money is put into the hands of the large corporations to pay out to their employees, who in turn buy consumer goods.

It is when you begin to think of a peacetime economy that everybody, from the average worker to the labor leader, from the government official to the big capitalist begins to have nightmares. Each may have a different view of what should happen to the unemployed, but they all have one thing in common: they believe that man must work.

The average worker believes this because that is the only way he or she has been able to live. The labor leaders believe it because if workers didn't have to work, labor leaders wouldn't have anyone to lead. The government official believes it because the role of the government has become that of regulating relations between management and labor, both of whom must exist in order for government to play its part. Thus, as Kennedy's speech to the UAW convention and his overtures to industry show so clearly, government alternately appeases and rebukes both wage-earners and capitalists. Finally, the big capitalists can only see themselves growing richer and more powerful if they are in control of the destinies of the workers and the means whereby they must earn a living.

None of these people, and this includes the liberal economists who propose public works and foreign aid as a substitute for war contracts, has left behind the 18th-century philosophy that man must earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and that anyone who can't or doesn't work (unless he happens to own property), is a misfit, an outcast, and a renegade from society.

None of these people is ready to admit that with automation and cybernation we have to have a much bolder and more radical approach to society. The change which we are facing is more radical than the change which 5,000 years ago transformed men from roving bands of tribesmen and hunters into forced laborers on the irrigation projects of the early states.

Today the creative work of production is being done by the research engineers, the program planners, the scientists, the electronic experts. Already there are over 850,000 scientists in industry, without counting all those outside of industry who are working toward much the same goals. What they are creating is a mode of production which, as long as the present system continues, excludes more and more people from playing any productive role in society. This means that our society, as we have known it, is just as finished as feudal society was finished by the time capitalism arrived on the scene. It means not only that hundreds of thousands are yearly being displaced from production, but also that millions are outsiders to begin with. These millions have never been and never can be absorbed into this society at all. They can only be absorbed into a totally new type of society whose first principle will have to be that man is the master and not the servant of things.

Today in the United States there is no doubt that those at the bottom are growing in numbers much faster than the system will ever be able to absorb. This reflects the population explosion which is taking place right here inside the United States. Already there are millions of young men and women who have never held any jobs at all and who live from hand to mouth, either by charity or by petty crime: in other words at the expense of those who are working. They cannot be integrated into society unless they work, and there is no prospect of any work for them. What is more, the social measures which made work for such people in the days of the New Deal are completely silly in an age when you can dig ditches, lay bridges, and build buildings merely by pushing a few buttons.

All this means that there can be no smug plan for reforming this system. Because when you add to those who are daily being displaced from the plant the millions who have never even had a chance to work inside a plant, what you have is no longer just the unemployed and the castaways, but a revolutionary force or army of outsiders and rejects who are totally alienated from this society.

We must have no illusions that there will be any easy unity between these outsiders and those

who are inside the system because they are still working. Already, as we have noted above, the labor organizations themselves are separating off the employed from the unemployed for whom they can do nothing. The present work force is itself a product of the old society and struggling to survive within it. This means that we must look to the outsiders for the most radical, that is the deepest, thinking as to the changes that are needed. What ideas will they have? They have not yet expressed them clearly, but their target is very clear. It is not any particular company or any particular persons but the government itself. Just how they will approach or penetrate this target I do not know nor do I know what will happen when they have done what they must do. But I know that the army of outsiders which is growing by leaps and bounds in this country is more of a threat to the present "American way of life" than any foreign power.

Ask the average American what is the biggest threat to our way of life and the chances are that he will blurt out "Communism." He sees the threat as coming from a foreign power. Yet the fact that, after all these years of capitalism, he is so afraid of another system means that capitalism has definitely not proved itself to be the system which man must have to live his life as a full and equal human being.

If you can once get the average American to stop blaming everything on the Communists (or the Negroes, or the Jews, or the Italians) and finally face up to the fact that there is a crisis in his own country, and then ask him what the real crisis is, the chances are good that he will say "Automation." But when he says this, he still has a distant look in his eyes as if automation, too, is something that will pass without creating or demanding too great a change in the present system of having to work for a living.

But for the outsiders who have never been and can never be involved in this system, regardless of how much free enterprise or initiative they show, automation means something much deeper. It means that they have to find a new concept of how to live and let live among human beings. A new generation of these "workless people" is rapidly growing up in this country. For them, the simple formula of "more schools and more education and more training" is already outmoded. We already have with us a generation of youth who have completed high school and had some kind of training and yet have found no mode of production into which they can fit. Because as fast as they are trained for a higher technical stage of production, just as fast does a new technical revolution take place. Whereas the old workers used to hope that they could pit their bodies against iron and outlast the iron, this new generation of workless people knows that even their brains are being outwitted by the iron brains of automation and cybernation. To tell these people that they must work to earn their living is like telling a man in the big city that he should hunt big game for the meat on his table.

This means that the new generation, the outsiders, the workless people, now have to turn their thoughts away from trying to outwit the machines and instead toward the organization and reorganization of society and of human relations inside society. The revolution which is within these people will have to be a revolution of their minds and hearts, directed not toward increasing production but toward the management and distribution of things and toward the control of relations among people, tasks which up to now have been left to chance or in the hands of an elite.

There are some people among the older generation who recognize that this is the threat or promise contained in automation and cybernation, but most of them are afraid to face the reality and continue to hope that the old house can still be patched up. The outsiders, in contrast, owe no allegiance to any system but only to themselves. Being workless, they are also stateless. They have grown up like a colonial people who no longer feel any allegiance to the old imperial power and are each day searching for new means to overthrow it.

I am not saying that this new generation of outsiders is as of now an organized force. It is not as simple as that. In fact, no existing organization would even think of organizing them, which means that they will have to organize themselves and that the need to organize themselves will soon be forced upon them as they grow in numbers like the beggars on the streets of India. The big difference between them and Indian beggars is that in India the means to live without having to work are not available, while in the United States these means are all around them, before their very eyes. The only question, the trick, is how to take them.

The forces of a cold war are thus taking shape inside the United States: the war between those who are setting up all kinds of social agencies, training bureaus, and the like to head off the stateless and workless people, and those who are learning every day that these stop-gaps offer no solution to their problems. Just as the natural wealth and technical advances of this country have meant that a lot more people here can share in the material things of life than anywhere else, so the eruption of this new group will pose radical concepts beyond the imagination of us all, but certainly founded on the principle that people should be able to enjoy everything in life and from life, without being fettered or limited by any system.

These radical concepts cannot come from organized labor. In the 30's the class struggle of the American workers, united, organized, and disciplined by the process of production, reached its greatest height in the organization of the CIO. Today in the 60's the American labor movement has reached the end of the road. In the face of the social and ideological adjustments that are necessary to meet the revolutionary changes that have taken place in technology, organized labor is as reactionary today as organized capital was thirty years ago. The fundamental reason for this is that organized labor continues to cherish the idea that man must work in order to live, in an age when it is technologically possible for men simply to walk out on the streets and get their milk and honey. To talk about full employment and getting the unemployed back to work at this point when we are on the threshold of the workless society, is as reactionary as it was for the "rugged individualists" to say in the 30's that the only reason why a man wasn't working was that he didn't have the initiative to go out and get himself a job.

Even in their best days, it should be remembered, the CIO and AFL were not able to do much about unemployment. In 1939 when the Second World War began, there were still more than 9 million unemployed, well over twice today's official figure. With the war, millions of old and new workers went into the plants and the last layer of the population, which had up to then been completely outside of industry—the Negroes—was finally brought in. Following the war the pent-up purchasing power of the population kept employment high for several years. But after the Korean War management started a two-pronged attack, automating the plants and tightening up on work rules. At about the same time, unemployment began creeping up again.

Organized labor, instead of facing the challenge inherent in automation and the potentiality of material abundance, responded by continuing to seek ways and means to achieve full employment—ranging all the way from demands for a shorter work week and retraining programs to appeals for bigger tax cuts and fatter war contracts.

Why is organized labor unable to face the issues posed by the 60's? To answer this question we have to look at the changes that have taken place in this country, industrially and socially, over the last quarter century.

As long as the vast majority of a population has not begun to acquire the consumption goods that are possible under conditions of modern technology, the employers are producing not only for profit but also for social use. The people actually need the goods that are being produced, the refrigerators, the cars, the radios, the TVs. These goods provide the material base so that the people

can live like human beings. But once the point is reached where the vast majority have acquired these goods, then the manufacturers are no longer producing for social use. Apart from a reduced need for service and replacement, they are producing for a market which has been created not by the needs of the people but by the needs of the manufacturers. They continue producing so that they can continue to make profits and to stimulate the necessary demand, they produce shoddy goods, plan obsolescence, and above all “sell” the population, stimulating its appetite for more and more useless commodities, propagandizing and corrupting it.

Organized labor shares the concern of the employers to keep production going. Its motive is different but the aim is the same. The manufacturers want to maintain production for the sake of profits; the unions want to maintain it to keep up their memberships. Thus the labor organizations have in effect become partners with management in a system of corrupting the population. Each needs the other because each is faced with the same insoluble predicament of capitalism today—that through the use of machines enough can now be produced for everybody without any need either for millions of dollars in profits or millions of people at work.

In order to continue with its philosophy of full employment, organized labor has become part and parcel of the “American way of life.” It has become partners with the military in establishing and maintaining a war machine the only purpose of which is to threaten the destruction of all humanity.

The philosophy of “Solidarity Forever” on which the labor movement was built is today in rags and tatters. There is a never-ending dog-eat-dog fight going on between international unions over the available work—who is going to build a new factory, who has jurisdiction in a new construction project, who is going to do the electrical work or transport the equipment. There is a never-ending dog-eat-dog fight going on between locals of the same union over which plant is actually going to get a particular operation or which local will have jurisdiction in a new construction project, who is going to do the electrical work or transport the equipment. There is a never-ending dog-eat-dog fight going on between those workers who want to work only 40 hours a week and the money-hungry ones who spend all their time catering to the boss and stool-pigeoning on their fellow-workers in order to get the fat \$150–\$200-a-week checks that come from working 50, 60, and 70 hours. Meanwhile those inside the plant become ever more removed from those outside.

The philosophy of “Workers of the World Unite” is also in rags and tatters. The AFL-CIO has official connections with organized labor in other countries and periodically sends a token sum to support a strike. But American organized labor’s attitude to the workers of the world is essentially the same as its attitude to the outsiders at home. They should be thrown a bone now and then, but if they were to make any real progress it would be a threat to the insiders. Thus, organized labor is as opposed to imports from foreign countries and as anxious about America’s future in relation to the European Common Market as the most reactionary employer. It is as opposed as the American government to the independent development of the economy of the underdeveloped countries and as ready to act as a counter-revolutionary force against all revolutions in the underdeveloped countries.

What about the union militants? Every few months around any auto shop, groups of workers are getting together to discuss how to “bring the union back to the shop.” The union is already there, officially. It is recognized by the company; a contract exists between the company and the international governing that particular plant. Yet these workers are constantly getting together with the expressed purpose of “bringing the union back.” For them “bringing the union back” means bringing back the atmosphere that existed in the late 30’s and the early 40’s—when they would shut down the plant over a production dispute and settle the issue then and there; when they could talk back to the supervisor without being penalized; when they could go to the toilet whenever they

needed to; when they could get a day off to attend someone's funeral without begging the foreman, as they have to do nowadays.

These are very natural and human rights, rights which the workers themselves know they have lost. Yet these groups attract very little support. In fact, the more militant they are the less support they get. Instead, the groups who more or less follow the union machine usually win majority support, easily coming out on top in union elections without even making any promises to the workers except to support the policies of the international.

The militants who are always meeting and discussing and devising ways and means of "bringing back the union" are generally the most advanced workers in the sense that they are ready to struggle for better working conditions. Yet when you tell these militants that they are never going to bring the union back to where it was, because the union that they are thinking about and hoping for has already outlived its usefulness, and that the workers are never again going to struggle for and through this kind of organization, they can't understand why. They have become so accustomed to what used to happen in the early days of the union, when large numbers of workers were very militant, that they still believe that there are plenty of militant workers left in the shop and that all they have to do is to get together and organize them. They cannot face the changes that have taken place in production since the 30's. They cannot get it into their heads that these old workers who used to be so militant are now a vanishing herd who know that they are a vanishing herd, who know that, because of automation, the days of workers like themselves in manufacturing are numbered, and who have therefore decided that all they can do now is fight to protect their pensions and seniority and hope that the company will need them to work until they are old enough to retire or die, whichever comes first.

You would think that in this restless group of militants who have fought so hard for progress, there would be some who could see the handwriting on the wall and realize that work as they have known it, and the mobilization of people in struggle over working conditions, have become obsolete. But it is in this group of militants that you find the greatest reluctance to accept the inevitability of the workless society. In this refusal to face reality, these militants who are so advanced are really behind the average worker who has reconciled himself to eventual oblivion. Why?

It is precisely because these workers are more advanced, in the sense of wanting to struggle for progress, that they cling to the idea of organizing the struggle through work. The fact is that it is through the struggle over work that social reforms have been won over the last 100 years, and especially in this country from the middle 30's to the middle 40's. The struggle around working conditions has been the most progressive factor in American society, educating and organizing people to fight for human rights as nothing else in this society has been able to do. These militants know this because they have lived through it. Most of them, without ever having read a word of Marx, have experienced in life what Marx analyzed in theory. They cannot give up an idea or a method on which they have depended for progress until they can see another one, and they have not yet seen or figured out another way to fight for human needs and human rights.

There are a lot of people outside the shop, not only radicals but liberals also, who have much the same idea as these union militants. Only it is not as obvious in their case because they are not in the shop and therefore do not have the opportunity to organize themselves into little groups so easily. But these liberals and radicals are also hoping and waiting on the workers to struggle. Even those who attack Marx most viciously still think like Marx, because what Marx thought was so true until only a few short years ago when the new age of nuclear energy, automation, and cybernation began.

Actually these union militants will go down fighting for things like a shorter work week (30-for-

40), or two months paid vacation, or six months paid furlough, or the four-hour day—all of which demands are within the framework of keeping the work force intact. Even when there is no longer any reason, because of the development of automation and cybernation, to keep the work force intact, they will still fight to keep it intact. Therefore it is hopeless to look to them as the ones to lead the fight for a workless society. The workless society is something that can only be brought about by actions and forces outside the work process.

Government officials, labor officials, and the university professors whom they both hire to help them beat their brains are working overtime, trying to find some scheme to create full employment. But whatever schemes they come up with, whether the 35-hour week, new training programs, bigger and badder war contracts, or bigger and better public works projects, they are playing a losing game. America is headed toward full unemployment, not full employment.

In 1962 I visited the West Coast where a large percentage of the country's war work is concentrated and the newspapers rejoice every time a new war contract is awarded to the area. Yet, talking to guys who work in the plant like myself, I found that their main worry is what to do about automation and the people it is throwing out of work. A friend of mine told me about a Mexican-American who works in the plant with him and who describes automation as a beast of the world which is moving in on people and nobody knows what to do about "it." This worker has come to the conclusion that the only sensible solution is for the company to put in new machines as fast as it can, while every guy who is displaced by these new machines continues to receive his weekly paycheck. His idea is that the sooner the machines become fully employed and the people become fully unemployed, the better.

My friend has put some thought into how this would work and has decided that if the old philosophy that man has to go to work must be retained, then the displaced workers could continue to go to the plant and just sit around and watch the machines. He was quite sure that if this happened the workers would be continually putting forward new suggestions as to how to redesign the machines to make them more efficient and displace more men, instead of doing what they are now doing, constantly trying to think up new ways to fight the machine so as to keep their jobs. We both agreed that there is nothing more agonizing than holding back the ideas that every worker is constantly getting as to how to increase productivity.

I told him that I could foresee a time when machines would be so perfected that there would be no need for the great majority of people to go into the plant except occasionally, and that I was quite sure that, once released from the necessity to work, men and women would come up with new ideas for increasing productivity that would astonish the world. Fishermen just fishing for fun would come up with new ideas for fishing, guys puttering around their lawns would think up new ways to grow grass, people with nothing to do but sit around and observe would be constantly producing new ideas and bursting to share them with others. It is only the necessity to work, *forced labor*, that has created in man the need to fight new modes of production and to keep new ideas about increasing production to himself.

One immediate step out of the dilemma would be to employ the seniority system in reverse. As new machines are brought in, those who have been working longest, instead of being kept on the job, should be eased out of work. Every company, even if it has to get subsidies from the government to do so, should put in the most modern equipment available, and as this is done those workers with the highest seniority should be laid off with continued full pay equal to that of those still working.

This would be very far from being a solution, however, since it does not take into consideration the million and a half young people who are entering the adult world every year plus the millions like them who, being unemployed, have no claim on any company. It is in connection with this

group of outsiders that those who hope for full employment are really caught in a dilemma. These millions can never become part of any work force in the sense that we know it. There is no Siberia to which they can be sent, and even if there were they wouldn't go. They have seen too much of what is possible in this society; they also know that there are enough of them around to be a threat. Already the big question in cities like Detroit is whether a way can be found for these outsiders to live before they kill off those of us who are still working. How long can we leave them hanging out in the streets ready to knock the brains out of those still working in order to get a little spending money?

Obviously it would be far better to give these outsiders a weekly check also, rather than leave them with no alternative but to look for guns and knives to use against the insiders. But giving them a check is not enough. There has to be some way in which to develop their creative abilities and sense of responsibility, because without this they can become completely empty creatures. What makes it so easy to propose a weekly pay check for those who have worked all their lives is that they have already acquired some discipline and sense of responsibility from their work. But those who have never worked and will never get a chance to in this society will have to find some other way to develop their creative abilities before these are destroyed by forced idleness.

This is one of the great challenges facing our society today. Another is the question of peace and war to which we now turn.

Chapter 5: Peace and War

When the A-Bomb was exploded by the United States over Hiroshima, the vast majority of Americans rejoiced. To them the Bomb simply meant the end of the war and the return home of brothers, sons, fathers. Few Americans realized the potential threat that the Bomb represented to all mankind. In fact, not until much later was it learned that key scientists who had actually been involved in the creation of the Bomb had argued against its military use, pointing out that it would be only a few years before other countries would have the same weapon. Einstein, without whose theories the A-Bomb could never have been created, said later that if he had known the use to which his ideas would be put, he would have become a plumber.

Outside the United States today what comes to many people's minds when the Bomb is mentioned is the fact that it was first dropped on a nation of colored people and not on the Germans who were also the enemy in World War II. Inside the United States this fact is rarely mentioned.

For four years after the end of the Second World War the A-Bomb was to the United States what the British Navy had been to Western Civilization prior to the First World War. It made the United States "boss," and the Americans didn't let anybody forget it. But it was obvious that the United States could not long retain its monopoly of the Bomb. In fact, in the era of scientific technology symbolized by the Bomb, the United States could only lose the military supremacy which it had previously enjoyed on the basis of mass armaments production. It was difficult therefore for people outside the United States to take seriously the American offer to put the Bomb into mothballs if no other power would try to produce one.

Then in 1949 two things happened which brought about a radical change in world politics. First, the largest country in the world, China, was taken over by the Communists. And second, Russia exploded an A-Bomb.

The mere thought that the United States would now have to justify its position as a world power in more or less equal competition with the Russians produced panic in every section of American official society. It was this panic which created the environment in which McCarthy ran wild.

In rapid succession a list of subversive organizations was issued by the Attorney General and laws were passed to screen and bar from the United States anyone suspected of radical connections. Non-citizens were denied the formal democratic rights of free speech, free belief, and free association, of arrest only with warrant, and of the right to judicial appeal over administrative decree. Naturalized citizens, some of them residents of this country since infancy, became subject to denaturalization and deportation by administrative action if suspected of radical politics at any time in their lives. The heads of government began accusing their predecessors of treason, like murderers and cutthroats at bay in a basement. New Deal liberals were hunted with the ferocity of a pack of blood-thirsty wolves; scientists, newspapermen, and artists were hounded into becoming informers or else giving up their professions. People hid their books, destroyed records by Paul Robeson, and cancelled their subscriptions to liberal newspapers and magazines, lest by these signs of intellectual activity they invite investigation on suspicion of subversion.

In foreign policy the United States began its brink-to-brink improvisation; the hasty gathering up of allies like Franco and Chiang Kai-shek, completely discredited in their own countries and abroad; the wooing of Tito; the arming of Germany; and finally the reckless development and testing of bigger and better bombs and guided missiles, competing with Russia like two football teams competing for an international championship.

During this time the Marxist organizations in the United States persistently pointed out the horrors of the Bomb, but primarily in the spirit of propaganda, against capitalism and some against Russian Communism, and in general for socialism. Meanwhile they went their merry or unmerry way, as if the Bomb were just another stage in imperialist warfare, saying little about it as long as the workers were quiet about it. With the history of past anti-war groupings in mind, and particularly comparing their own "realism" with the idealism of the pacifists, they were content to rest their hopes on the workers' eventually making a revolution, taking control of society, and putting an end to imperialist war. Actually, what they failed to realize is that just as automation represents a revolution in the process of production, so the A-Bomb, H-Bomb, and intercontinental missiles represent a revolution in the process of warfare. Mankind has now reached the stage of pushbutton war and mass suicide.

Up to now it had been possible to speculate about what attitude the workers or the masses of the population might or ought to adopt toward a war once it had been declared or started, e.g. organize a general strike or rise in protest and bring it to an end. It had been possible to predict that the shattering effects of a prolonged war fought with modern weapons would set the stage for revolutions, after which the workers could begin the herculean task of reconstructing society.

The new reality today, however, is that the Bomb does not recognize any distinctions between race, class, or nation. When it falls, it will fall on everybody, regardless. When it falls, it will leave no class behind to reconstruct society—not even the workers. A nuclear war would leave no time for anyone to debate or argue about policy or organize a general strike. If there is going to be any movement that will stop the Bomb and create the conditions for revolution, it will have to come *before* the Bomb is dropped—not afterwards. If there is going to be a revolution over the question of nuclear war, it will have to be *before* the nuclear war starts—not afterwards.

With the launching of Sputnik and its beep-beep-beep overhead, the world suddenly became aware that an H-Bomb could be launched in the same way. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans which had made so many generations of Americans feel so secure no longer appeared as a protection. Americans began to feel the dread and horror with which Europeans for years had been responding to the brinkmanship of Dulles.

But the years of Cold War had made war a way of life for the government and all its military

and paramilitary departments. It had become a way of life for half of America's major industries. It had become a way of life for America's workers. It had become a way of life for the trade unions. It had become a way of life for the professional crusaders against Communism and the elements in the population whom they represent. It had become a way of life even for most of America's churches.

Significantly, the only people who had begun a serious questioning of war as a way of life were those most directly and intimately involved in the revolution which had taken place in modern warfare, the atomic scientists themselves. Even before the explosion of the first Bomb over Japan, a task force of scientists, headed by Dr. James Franck, had set itself up as a "Committee on Social and Political Implications" and submitted a report to the government arguing against the direct military use of the Bomb. In 1945, after the Bomb had been dropped, a group of scientists under the leadership of Eugene Rabinovitch, a Chicago chemist, began publishing the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* as a forum where scientists could point out the perils of nuclear warfare and examine roads to disarmament. So intense have been the debate and discussion among scientists that it is possible to speak of two unofficial "parties" in the American scientific community: the "humanitarian party" which calls in varying degrees for a ban on the Bomb; and the "government" party which supports and lends authority to the government's policy. The humanitarian party, emphasizing the cooperative, non-national, and in fact international character of science, has been responsible for holding international conferences with their colleagues from behind the Iron Curtain. These conferences have become known as the Pugwash Conferences, since the first three of them (1957–1959) were held on the Pugwash, Nova Scotia, estate of American industrialist Cyrus Eaton, after permission to enter the United States was denied by American authorities to Communist scientists.

However, the humanitarian party among the scientists has remained isolated from the American public. The loudest voice heard in public has been that of Dr. Edward Teller, chiefly responsible for the creation of the H-Bomb and leading exponent of government policy. When Nobel Laureate Linus Pauling was called before a Congressional Committee in 1960 and asked to inform on those who had helped him get up a 1958 ban-the-bomb petition to the UN (this petition had been signed by 11,021 scientists from 49 countries, including 104 from the United States), it caused scarcely a ripple in this country.

In the summer of 1961 this situation began to change. After a three-year moratorium on testing by the two powers, and at the height of the Berlin crisis, the Russians resumed nuclear testing at a rapid rate. By this time the American people could no longer comfort themselves by doubting the technological capacities of the Russians. Gagarin and Titov put an end to that.

In Britain where the country had been caught between East and West and where it was obvious that the whole island could be destroyed by one bomb, the ban-the-bomb movement had been growing for years and reached a peak in 1960–1961. The Africans declared their opposition to any nuclear testing on their soil. But in the United States anti-bomb demonstrations could rarely rally more than a few hundred supporters, mainly long-time pacifists.

Following the Russian tests, however, the movement began to take on mass momentum. November 1, on the initiative of a few women in Washington, D.C., a series of demonstrations took place in 60 cities from coast to coast. In all, about 50,000 women took part. In New York and Los Angeles there were several thousand women in the demonstrations. In the Boston area hundreds of students and university faculty members marched on the Federal Arsenal at Watertown. With the entry onto the scene of the women, the students, and the professors, the ban-the-bomb movement began to take on a broad social character. Since November 1, 1961, Women Strike for Peace committees in

various cities have remained more or less intact, in order to organize periodic demonstrations at the UN, before Federal Buildings, to march on Washington, to send delegations to City Councils and State Legislatures, etc. Across the country over 4,000 professors added their names to an open letter to President Kennedy, protesting the futility of Civil Defense in this age of nuclear war. Students from all over the country organized a March on Washington on February 16, 1962.

It is quite obvious that these demonstrations have begun to take on the character of a social movement, confronting the warfare state and implying a challenge to it despite the announced (and no doubt genuine) intentions of the participants simply to implement the “peace race” proposals of the President. In turn, the growth of the ban-the-bomb movement has given and will give further impetus to the counter-revolutionary super-patriots, led by the Birchites, the militant ex-generals, the Dixiecrats, and the China Lobby, and gain support among the veterans and middle-class layers who live on the past glories of the All-American state. Up to now the organized labor movement has given only token support to the peace movement. Obviously fearful that widespread agitation against the Bomb will upset the warfare economy and increase dissatisfaction among workers already living in dread of unemployment, it has carefully refrained from calling upon workers to participate in the ban-the-bomb movement.

The new peace groupings, and particularly the scientists and women, have already passed one test that other organizations in the United States have failed since the Cold War and McCarthy era began. They have been able to meet and overcome the label of “pro-Communism.” This was the great victory won by the Women Strike for Peace at the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings in late 1962. Up to then, every grouping which had been labelled in this way by patriotic organizations or by any of the various governmental committees and agencies had been fatally weakened. But so great is the fear of nuclear annihilation among the scientists and women that it has enabled them to overcome the fear of Communism. Communism at worst could only mean a change in the political system. The Bomb would mean no existence and therefore no system at all. In that sense these peace groupings have gone beyond the “Better Red than Dead” smear, and this in itself is a great victory.

But the United States is so full of other social and economic contradictions that even though the new peace movement has been able to surmount the kind of official and unofficial attack which heretofore has crippled other organizations which began to tackle the warfare state, this has not been enough. In October, 1962, the Cuban crisis came along, and although many of the members of the peace movement found themselves in protest picket lines, the heart of the peace movement has practically stopped beating since that time. The fact is that, for the peace movement really to have contested the President’s actions in Cuba, it would have had to call upon the missile workers in *this* country not to produce missiles, and for the sailors of *this* country not to man the ships. In other words, it would have had to face the reality that as long as the United States has missiles and rockets, every other country has the right to have missiles and rockets, even one only ninety miles off the shores of the United States, and regardless of whether such missiles are offensive or defensive.

Up to the time of the Cuban crisis the peace movement in this country only had to grapple with the question of bombs and missiles in the hands of the two great powers—the United States and the USSR. But in the Cuban crisis it was confronted with the question of missiles and bombs in the hands of a country which is part of the world revolutionary and anticolonial struggle. This is the question which the peace movement is going to have to face increasingly as the months and years pass.

In the Cuban crisis the peace movement was confronted with the question of the ex-colonial

countries and their rights, just as in the course of its development inside this country, it has already been confronted with the question of its relation to the Negro struggle. The reason is that the question of peace is much greater than the question of simply stopping bomb tests. All the factors which go into deciding whether a nation should have to depend upon the Bomb or not are shaped by the world revolutionary struggle and also by the struggle between the already developed nations and developing nations. Climaxing it all is the question of China and who will be able to talk to the Chinese. What peace group in the United States would even be allowed to send someone to China? How would they even know the road to China, considering the colossal ignorance that exists in this country on the question of China? What will they have to offer the Chinese? And why should the Chinese even listen to any of these Americans when the Chinese have already been read out of the human race by Americans, in the same way that Negroes have been read out of the human race by Americans for 300 years? It is quite clear that the Chinese are not caught in the same predicament that the Negroes have been caught in for so long. The Negroes were trapped inside this country, but the Chinese have their own country and they are not asking to be integrated into this country. In fact, they are not even asking to be integrated into the world society. They existed long before other modern societies came on the scene, and they are not begging anyone to recognize their independence. They achieved it themselves through a revolution in 1949.

Will the peace movement fight for the recognition of Red China simply from the standpoint of fear, or is it going to fight for the recognition of Red China from the standpoint of the plain humanity of the Chinese? The peace movement cannot save humanity as long as it refuses to face the inhumanity that exists inside this country toward other racial and national groupings, and that exists in the relations of this country to other races and nations. Nor can it ever get a peacetime economy in this country until it clashes with the war economy and the reasons why such a war economy exists. Because the same people who are for war in this country are those who are for discrimination against races and nations. They are the ones who are for the continuation of American superiority over other nations and other areas of the world. They are the ones who want the workers to continue to work in order to live, even if the work they are doing is nothing but war work in order to kill. And they are the same ones who are for taxing the war workers in order to get the money to keep on making war materials. There will be no peace until there is war against these Americans.

Chapter 6: The Decline of the United States Empire

History has known many empires—the Sumerian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the Chaldean Empire, the Egyptian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the British Empire, to name only a few. All these empires came to an end, usually as a result of a combination of military defeat and internal revolt. Now it is the turn of the United States Empire.

For over a century, under the cover of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States has ruled its Latin American domain as Chicago gangsters rule a certain territory, warning all others to keep out.³ Long before the word “satellite” was used to describe the relationship of the Eastern European countries to Russia, it was obvious that the economic and political life of Latin America revolved around the Yankee sun. What the Asian and African colonies were to the European powers and what Eastern Europe has been to Russia, the Latin American republics have been to the United States.

³I am not implying that Latin America constitutes the entire United States Empire. But together with Canada, Latin America does constitute the heart and core of the Empire, and both its problems and its fate can best be studied there.

Although independent in name, their economies have been completely at the mercy of Big Brother to the North, and therefore also their politics. They have been kept in the status of countries with one-crop economies, supplying sugar, bananas, coffee, tin, copper, etc., chiefly to the United States, which could therefore control them by manipulating commodity prices and quotas. At the same time the United States has been the largest supplier of Latin American imports of manufactured goods and of investment capital. In fact, 80 percent of foreign capital invested in Latin America, public and private, comes from the United States. When manipulation and control by economic means have fallen short, the United States has hesitated only a moment before using money and arms directly to prevent and foment, divert and steer revolutions and counter-revolutions, to make and unmake governments. The chief function of the United States government has been to protect the right of firms like United Fruit to exploit the cheap labor and rich resources of Latin America; to maintain in power anti-Communist and pro-United States dictators like Batista in Cuba and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic; and to protect the landowners of gigantic estates from revolt by peasant laborers.

All this time few people in the United States knew anything about this vast continent just below the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande. Those who thought about it at all did so in terms that the movies have made familiar, as the land of bananas and tropical splendor where North Americans can go live it up in the midst of poverty and misery, where Yankee adventurers decide to sell or not to sell guns to rebel generals according to their love or hate for beautiful damsels. Then in 1958 Vice President Nixon was sent on a good-will tour to reassure the South Americans that, despite the billions of dollars of aid sent only to Europe, their Good Neighbor to the North had not forgotten them. When the Vice President was spat on and stoned by mobs in Peru and Venezuela, the government and the people of the United States began to realize how overdue was an agonizing reappraisal of their relations with Latin America. It was clear that the Good Neighbors to the South were getting out of hand, and that the winds of change were blowing in Latin America, stirring up revolutions of the masses which were quite different from those of rival factions which the United States had found so easy to control.

The winds of change became a hurricane in the Cuban Revolution. What started out in Cuba as opposition to Batista inevitably became a head-on conflict with Yankee imperialism. All upheavals which had fallen short of social revolution had fallen back into dependence on Yankee imperialism; Venezuela is a good example. Large-scale private property in Cuba, which was in fact primarily United States private property, had to be confiscated before Cuba could be truly politically independent. Going deeper into social revolution meant deepening the conflict with Yankee imperialism and vice versa. This was the path which Castro had to follow whether he wanted to or not.

But Yankee imperialism could not afford to let Cuba set an example in social revolution for the rest of Latin America. Before the Second World War Mexico could get away with the expropriation of foreign oil properties because there was no real danger then that the example would spread. But in 1960, the survival of the Cuban Revolution meant its certain imitation by the rest of Latin America. On the other hand, to have a social revolution in Cuba is practically like trying to have one in one of our 50 states. The Cuban one-crop sugar economy was almost as closely tied to the United States economy as the one-crop auto economy of Detroit is. To reorganize and diversify this one-crop economy required not only confiscation of large-scale United States property. It also required an enormous amount of technical and economic aid. Under the circumstances of United States hostility, this aid could come only from those countries which not only recognized the validity of Cuba's struggles for independence but had reason to welcome them.

In Africa, thousands of miles away from the Cold War powers, it is not too difficult to be neutral.

But Cuba, only 90 miles away from Florida, began by being as much an economic, military, and political satellite of the United States as Hungary and the other Eastern European countries are of Russia. Therefore, to break away, it had to have the political and economic aid which Yugoslavia, for example, got from the United States after it broke with Russia in 1948. But Cuba's problem was even more critical. Yugoslavia did not have to confiscate Russian property, and it continued to claim membership in the "socialist camp." Cuba not only had to confiscate United States property. It had to denounce capitalism altogether.

Revolutionaries in the United States hailed the Cuban Revolution as the first socialist revolution in the Americas. The Communist world also hailed it as such. The revolutionaries living under United States capitalism had particular reason to rejoice. United States capitalism, against which they had been fighting all these years and which is the greatest capitalist power of this century, had been challenged. But revolutionaries have many different and conflicting ideas as to what does and what does not constitute a socialist revolution. To some it is a matter of material gains; to others it is the nationalization of property; to others it is the political freedom and organization that the masses achieve and/or the arming of the masses; to others it is the formation of workers' councils to control production; to others it is joining the "socialist camp"; and to still others it is remaining entirely neutral of any bloc. The standards and the procedure used in determining the degree of support and rejoicing are much the same as those which the various revolutionary groupings have been employing for over forty years with regard to the Russian Revolution.

What these groupings rarely take into consideration is the fact that the world has moved in these forty years far beyond where it was at the time of the Russian Revolution, and that it is today divided into three blocs: the Western bloc, the Eastern bloc, and the neutralist bloc, with the last bloc lacking economic power but wielding great moral power. But moral power is a long-range thing. When a country within either the Western or the Eastern bloc breaks away from that bloc, it must *immediately* face the question of getting aid from the other bloc in order to survive. This reality has to be faced, not from the point of view of North American revolutionaries and *their* desires, hopes, standards, and morale, but from the standpoint of the country that is making the revolution. In Hungary the revolution was crushed before anyone but the Hungarians had to face the fact that the other Eastern European countries and the Russian people had not come to the support of the Hungarian Revolution, and that therefore the Hungarian Revolution could survive only if it received aid from the Western bloc.

Revolutionaries in the United States are going to be faced with a similar reality time and again in the period ahead as the Latin American revolution spreads. They have no right to use these revolutions to bolster their own morale or to test their own theories about what is socialism. First and foremost, they must take the position that they are *for* these revolutions and that it is the right of all these countries to break away from the power that has dominated them for so long and to govern themselves. They must be *for* all the Latin American countries freeing themselves from United States domination. And they must be *for* the people in these countries whenever the latter, feeling that their government is not running the country in the best interests of the people, throw that government out by whatever means they choose to take. The only time when they can legitimately take a position contrary to this is if the revolution takes the form of discrimination against a race or nationality, as for example against the Negroes in the United States or the Jews in Germany. They cannot start with the question, "Where is the revolution going to end?" Any genuine revolution today is going to have to go in a leftward-forward direction because the expectations of the masses everywhere can be satisfied only by permanent revolution in a leftward-forward direction. Except episodically, the direction is not going to be backward because the moment that

the revolution goes backward, there is going to be another revolution. Having clarified their minds on this fundamental position, radicals in the United States will no longer have to spend endless hours trying to justify these revolutions as socialist, trying to decide whether they should hold elections or not, whether the people are ready for parliamentary democracy or not.

It is quite obvious that the breakaway of the Latin American satellites will deprive North American capitalists of their main source of super-profit, and there is no reason to doubt that they will try to make their own people pay for these losses. The people of the United States will have to begin facing the fact that their luxurious standard of living has been won, in part, at the expense of the peasants and workers of Latin America. It is unlikely that United States capitalism will be able to arouse the people sufficiently to support an open, large-scale invasion of Cuba for counter-revolutionary purposes. Its strategy is rather to seek to isolate the Cuban Revolution through such measures as the Alliance for Progress. But the Cuban Revolution is not an artificial imported revolution, and the ingredients which set it off exist in all the Latin American countries. This means that, in addition to the Alliance for Progress, which has already become a joke, the United States will be carrying out all kinds of maneuvers and gangster tactics—diplomatic, military, and economic—from the use of warships to the blackmail use of economic aid, as it has been doing in the Dominican Republic and at the conferences of the Organization of American States.

It would be unrealistic to expect the people of the United States to come directly to the aid of the Latin American revolutions on any large scale. The grievances and issues which underlie these revolutions and which propel them to success are in Latin America itself. But there are going to be many, many shameful episodes similar to that of the attempted invasion of Cuba in 1961 which will shake up the people of the United States, make them squirm, and force them to question themselves and their government. The spread of the Latin American revolutions means that before the people of the United States there lies a painful period of decline in prestige and in confidence, both in themselves and in their governments, similar to that which the British have been experiencing with the decline of their empire. All this will help to deepen the general revolutionary crisis in this country.

Chapter 7: Rebels with a Cause

When people talk about how many Russians were killed behind the Iron Curtain in the concentration camps, it doesn't move American Negroes at all. The reason is very simple. The same thing happened to them in this country. White American workers didn't have to go through what the Russian workers went through under Stalin because the Negroes went through it for them on the cotton plantations of the South. Every immigrant who walked off the gangplank to make his way in the land of opportunity was climbing onto the Negroes' backs. For the United States is not like any other country which has built itself up on the basis of slavery. This country committed the most unpardonable crime of all. After freeing the slaves, it then segregated them off on the basis of color as inferior to the rest of the population, both in law and in fact. For this crime the United States will occupy a position in the annals of history comparable only to that occupied by Hitler Germany for the crimes it committed against the Jews. But Hitler lasted only twelve years during which he killed 6 million Jews. The crime of the United States has lasted over a century.

To this day, the American nation celebrates the Civil War and records it as a war to free the slaves. But in the eyes of Negroes the Civil War was the war which made it possible for the United States to be industrialized, the war which resulted in the Bargain of 1877 between Northern capital and Southern landed aristocracy, which left the former slaves living and working under a caste

system as brutal as that of slavery itself.

Following the Civil War and a brief period of Reconstruction during which Negroes enjoyed their newly won freedoms, the North made its infamous deal with the South. According to this deal, the South could go its way, using the Negroes as sharecroppers on the cotton plantations. In return, the North got from King Cotton much of the capital it needed for industrialization, both through export of cotton to England and from its own textile mills. This Bargain of 1877 was never recorded, but it ranks with the other more famous compromises on principle which have distinguished the United States in its relation to slavery.

The Negro question in the United States has therefore never been purely a question of race, nor is it purely a question of race today. Class, race, and nation are all involved. The American nation has become the giant of industry that it is today on the backs of the Negroes. The working class has from the very beginning been divided. The white workers were an aristocracy which benefited first and always from the exploitation of the Negroes, and in between by the exploitation of each new wave of immigrants.

What has made the problem of the socialist revolution in the United States so complicated and difficult for American Marxists is the fact that there has been no mass party of labor in this country as in the industrialized countries of Western Europe. What American Marxists have failed to understand is that in Western Europe the mass parties of labor were formed and were able to endure not only because of the working-class struggle against capital but also because the workers struggled against the landed aristocracy. During this same period no mass party of labor arose here because the workers, as long as they could go their way settling on the free lands of the West and working as free labor in the new industries of the East, were ready to allow the landed aristocracy of the South to exploit the Negroes. Thus the concept of "Black and White, Unite and Fight" has never had any basis in fact in this country: the blacks and whites were never struggling for the same things nor were they united in the same cause even when they were fighting side by side.

When the Civil War ended with the Negroes being returned to serfdom, it was the first major defeat of the class struggle in the United States. From that time on, Americans, including the radicals among them, have regarded the Negro question as a race question. Before the Civil War, Negro struggles were called rebellions and revolts. But after the Civil War and the formal emancipation of the Negroes, any violent action by Negroes was just called a "race riot" even when these actions were based on economic grounds, such as jobs, housing, or prices.

So long have the American people lived with this contradiction that it has become a way of life for them. That is why the question of what the Negro struggle really represents, what should be done about it, what is right and what is wrong, is shaking the United States more than any other issue. Why should America fight to free the world when America is itself not free? Why did America fight the last war for democracy when America itself does not have democracy? How can Americans really be for the freedom of Africa when they are not for freedom inside the United States? How can Americans be for freedom and equality the world over when they do not practice freedom and equality at home? How can Americans say they are for parliamentary democracy and free elections abroad when they do not have parliamentary democracy and free elections at home? How can America give advice to countries all over the whole world on how to solve their problems when it cannot solve its own problems? Why does America claim to want to give so much economic progress to everybody else when it finds it so hard to give economic progress to its own colored citizens? How can Americans say they have a free society when the question of where to eat and where not to eat, where to ride and where not to ride on buses, streetcars, and trains, in order to avoid the Negro haunts the average American white before he even leaves his house in the morning?

Thus what began as a class issue and was made into a race issue by the simple act of separating off the Negroes on the basis of color, has now in fact become a national issue, the great, the pervasive, the All-American question that is shaking up every organization, every institution, and every individual inside America and affecting the relationships of all these to the rest of the world: labor, the professions, the church, the courts, the armed forces, industry, employment, transportation, the family, marriage, schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, cities, suburbs, government on all levels, police, firemen, social welfare, political parties, press, TV, radio, movies, sports. The list is endless.

In the period following the Bargain of 1877, the Negro question remained dormant. Although this period was characterized by most brutal and shameful beatings, lynchings, and rape (worse than before the Civil War because now things were supposed to be different), Americans found it possible to look the other way. All that the Abolitionists had talked about and exposed in the prewar period was drowned out in the thunderous expansion of American industry and the shifting of the class struggle to the railroads and new industries created as a result of the war.

The first serious eruption of violence between whites and Negroes came in the big riot of 1908 in Springfield, Illinois. This in turn led to the birth of the NAACP, an organization formed by Negro intellectuals to defend Negro rights. The First World War and the crisis of American capitalism propelled into the urban centers and the United States Army many Negroes who brought with them all the questions and grievances which up to then had been silenced by the police state in the South. It was at this juncture that Negroes began to discover the many "ifs" and "buts" of American democracy. Up to this point they had been considering "Up North" a haven, revering Abe Lincoln and the Republican Party as their benefactors, putting the Yankee on a pedestal as the fighter for their freedom. Their disillusionment with Northern democracy continues to smolder in every Negro who has settled up North after knowing life in the South.

The clash between their expectations and the harsh realities of life in the North, plus the blow that they sensed had been dealt to Western Civilization by the First World War and the Russian Revolution, created the mass basis for the Garvey movement, which at its height is estimated to have attracted anywhere from one to six million Negroes, and forced the people of the United States for the first time since the Civil War to face the reality of the Negroes as a force. This reality was never to leave them completely again.

After the First World War the Northern ghettos began to swell as those Negroes in the South who could eke out enough money to make the trip continued to migrate to the North. In 1931, simultaneously with the Depression, the Scottsboro Case, involving the legal lynching by the Southern courts of nine young Negro boys, raised the Negro question once again to the status of a major issue not only in the United States but throughout the world. But Negroes were still on the defensive. During the Depression more thousands of Negroes, displaced by the mechanization of the farms, flocked into the cities both North and South. Here they took every advantage of the social reforms of the New Deal.

During the 1930's the CIO erupted, and the pattern which had been created by American capitalism in the Civil War repeated itself. To save the Union, Lincoln had freed the slaves. Now to save the union, Negroes were admitted into it, lest the capitalists use them as strikebreakers and scabs. But this was not too difficult for the unions to do. There were not too many Negroes in industry anyway, except at Ford (which was not unionized until 1941) and in steel where the Negroes did the heaviest and most menial work out of which the immigrants had been upgraded. The bulk of the Negroes were unemployed and on relief.

With the coming of the Second World War, Negroes up North made use of the opportunity created by the weakness of American capitalism to organize the March on Washington movement.

Out of this movement came Executive Order 8802, opening up jobs in defense industries to Negroes. Negroes did not give credit for this Order to Roosevelt and the American government. Far from it. Recognizing that America and its allies had their backs to the wall in their struggle with Hitler and Tojo, Negroes said that Hitler and Tojo, by creating the war which made the Americans give them jobs in industry, had done more for them in four years than Uncle Sam had done in 300 years.

Working in industry, fighting inside the armed forces, the Negroes now began to seize upon all the weaknesses of American capitalism. This led to a series of riots in army camps and major cities in the North which reached their peak at the height of the war in the year 1943. Only when the official records of the Armed Services are made public will Americans know how many hundreds of revolts took place among the Negro soldiers and sailors during the Second World War.

Inside the plants of the war industries the newly employed Negro workers carried on an offensive battle against both management and the white workers, forcing the white workers to face up to the idiocies of their prejudices and making them admit for the first time that Negroes could perform or learn all the operations of American production which the world had been led to believe could only be done by the superior whites. On the union floor, Negro workers raised problems which the white workers and the union had never before had to face, often causing splits inside the union and among the workers on the issues of human rights and human behavior.

When the war was over, the Negroes did not return to the farms as they had done in large numbers after the First World War. They had established themselves in industry and in Northern communities, and in many plants had built up seniority while white workers were losing it by moving from plant to plant.

In the South the whites started again the old intimidation that had been launched after the First World War. The Klan was reborn and a series of bombings and lynchings erupted from Florida to Mississippi in a campaign to put back in his place this Negro who, having seen another world in the army and in industry, was determined never to be tied down again. In 1948 President Truman, recognizing the growing political strength of the Negroes in the Northern cities, fought and won the election on a program of civil rights, despite the split-away of the Dixiecrats in Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama. By now the national government was on the defensive, both in the world and at home. The Cold War was under way and the familiar American pattern was repeating itself. "To save the free world from Communism" the United States was now ready to yield some rights to its Negro citizens.

In 1954 the Supreme Court handed down its famous decision regarding school desegregation, repudiating the old ruling that separate schools could be equal. The Court expected the desegregation to take place only "with all deliberate speed." Instead, Negro parents in the South began to organize and mobilize to send their children to formerly all-white schools, even in the face of hostile mobs bent upon upholding the familiar ways of American life and ready to spit and jeer at little children to do so. Then 14-year old Emmett Till from Chicago was brutally lynched in Mississippi and his kidnappers and murderers were let off scot-free in the courts. The flood tide of Negro revolt that had been dammed up for so long began to burst. For the first time Negroes were ready for an offensive against white society. Hitherto their actions had been defensive. Now there would come a series of offensive actions with staggering momentum, one right after the other. Going from the defensive to the offensive, the Negroes now constituted a revolutionary force completely different from that of the immigrant workers, each group of which had been assimilated into the American Way of Life.

In 1955–1956 the Montgomery bus boycott became an international issue as an entire community organized itself to boycott public transportation until the buses were desegregated according to

Federal law. In the border states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and in Washington, D.C., Negro parents were determined not to be put off by white mobs, and Eisenhower had to send Federal troops to Little Rock to uphold the Supreme Court decision.

Meanwhile, as the sleeping giant of Africa began to waken, the Negro people, who up to that time had been somewhat ashamed of their ancestry, instead began to feel ashamed that, living in the most advanced country in the world, they were so far behind their African brothers in achieving freedom. For the first time the Negroes began to appreciate that although they are a minority in the United States they are a majority in the world, and that what in the United States is portrayed as a race question is on a world scale the question of the rights of the majority of the human race.

In 1960 the Negro offensive took a new step forward. The sit-in movement started, astonishing Negroes who had migrated North in the belief that Southern Negroes would never rise up and fight for their rights. The student sit-in movement aimed at taking and enforcing equal rights in restaurants, stores, libraries, movies, beaches, parks, and all other public places in the South. Unlike any previous Negro movement, it aimed at creating the issue, provoking it. The Negro students were not just in the courts arguing the law, as the NAACP had been doing for so many years. They were making and enforcing it themselves, on the spot.

These Negro students were the sons and daughters of Negroes who fought and worked during the war, taught their children what their own parents had not taught them—that they were inferior to no one and had the same rights as any American—and now sent them to college to prepare for their equality. Their movement created pandemonium in the whole apparatus of the Southern courts—local courts, appeals courts, federal courts contradicted each other right and left, often in the presence of hundreds of Negroes who jammed the court-rooms. As the movement enlisted support and participation from thousands of white students on Southern and Northern campuses, pandemonium also began to be created in the relations of these youths to their parents. In 1961 the movement took on national scope with mixed groups of Freedom Riders converging on Deep South cities from both North and South.

Negro youth employed the non-violent tactics that had been evolved by Martin Luther King in the Montgomery boycott. These tactics were extremely effective insofar as they enabled the youth to take the initiative in a disciplined manner, achieve cooperation between white and Negro youth, and dramatize the realities of Southern justice. But the white mobs in the South responded with violence, and it was these mobs who were upheld by the Southern authorities as they restored order by hosing the students, throwing tear gas at them, arresting and jailing them, convicting them of breaking the law, and fining or imprisoning them.

Meanwhile another road was being worked out by Negro workers, both in the North and in the South. In Monroe, North Carolina, the Negro community, under the leadership of Robert F. Williams, an ex-marine and former auto worker, armed itself to meet Ku Klux Klan violence with violence. In the big cities of the North—Chicago, Detroit, Harlem, Los Angeles—the Black Muslims began to consolidate and multiply, attracting to their ranks hundreds of thousands of the lowest layers of Negro workers—domestic servants, the unemployed made expendable by automation, and outcasts from society in the prisons and hospitals. Through the militant black nationalist philosophy of the Muslims, these Negroes are now being rehabilitated and their social personalities liberated, *but not for integration into this society*. The Black Muslims, whose membership consists only of Afro-Americans, emphasize the need for American Negroes to follow the example of the Africans. According to their philosophy, white society is doomed and the only hope for the black man is to cut himself off entirely from this doomed society, develop a citizenship of his own, taking for himself the “40 acres” promised but never given him after the Civil War, and preparing himself to defend

his people against all white injustice and aggression.

With the growth of the Black Muslim movement and the emergence of the new Negroes in the South represented by the students and the Monroe community, the old Negro organizations like the NAACP have become a joke. NAACP, as Dick Gregory says, means *Negroes who Are not Acting like Colored People*. Whites who protest “But I belong to the NAACP,” are laughed at for deluding themselves that they have thereby bought insurance against the coming explosions. Like the union, the NAACP at this stage of the struggle has been by-passed by harsh realities.

Antagonisms among Negroes themselves have grown as debate and disagreement have sharpened over methods of struggle; Negroes have begun to realize that they will also have to fight Negroes before they win their freedom. Not only that. Inside the CIO, which built its reputation on the solidarity of the workers, there has sprung up a new organization of Negro workers who have made it clear that when the Negro masses explode, the labor organizations cannot expect Negro unionists to defend labor against the Negroes, for labor itself has proved to be too much a part of the American Way of Life which has to be uprooted. Thus, at this point in American history when the labor movement is on the decline, the Negro movement is on the upsurge. The fact has to be faced that since 1955 the development and momentum of the Negro struggle have made the Negroes the one revolutionary force dominating the American scene. Today the whole nation and the world are aware of their striking force, from boycotts to sit-ins to wade-ins to Freedom Rides. Inside the United States there is widespread fear of the growing strength of the Black Muslims, described by Martin Luther King as the “extremist elements lurking in the wings.” In the last half dozen years hundreds of organizations for Negro struggle have sprung up around specific issues, disbanding as speedily as they were formed when their objectives are achieved, and organizing anew when new problems require action. Among these, and growing in significance every day, are the parents’ organizations in Northern cities which, through the issue of school redistricting, are challenging the whole social pattern of city and suburb, and of government of the black central city areas by white “absentee landlords,” that has grown up since the war.

All this poses very fundamental questions not only for American society as a whole but for American revolutionaries. The old slogan “Black and White, Unite and Fight” has been proved false and obsolete, and the same is now happening to the assumption that Negroes can achieve their rights inside *this* society or without shaking up and revolutionizing the whole social structure. What is involved is not only the likelihood of open and armed revolt of the Negroes against the state power in the South. The Negroes are now posing before all the institutions of American society, and particularly those which are supposedly on their side (the labor organizations, the liberals, the old Negro organizations, and the Marxists), the same questions that have been posed by the Algerian Revolution to all of French society, with this difference that Algeria is outside France while the Negroes are right here inside America. But in the same way that, during the course of the Algerian Revolution, Algerians fought Frenchmen, and Algerians fought Algerians, and Frenchmen representing the national government eventually had to fight Frenchmen in Algeria, and the Algerians had to take over political power and now have to expropriate the property of Frenchmen—so in the United States the Negro revolt will lead to armed struggle between Negroes and whites, Negroes and Negroes, and Federal troops and armed civilians, and will have to move to political power and economic power. Already clashes between Federal troops and white civilians have been narrowly averted. The counter-revolution in the South may not yet be as well organized as the Secret Army Organization was in Algeria and France, but the attitudes, actions, and atrocities perpetrated by white civilians against Negroes are no different.

American Marxists have tended to fall into the trap of thinking of the Negroes as Negroes,

i.e. in race terms, when in fact the Negroes have been and are today the most oppressed and submerged sections of the workers, on whom has fallen most sharply the burden of unemployment due to automation. The Negroes have more economic grievances than any other section of American society. But in a country with the material abundance of the United States, economic grievances alone could not impart to their struggles all their revolutionary impact. The strength of the Negro cause and its power to shake up the social structure of the nation comes from the fact that in the Negro struggle all the questions of human rights and human relationships are posed. At the same time the American Negroes are most conscious of, and best able to time their actions in relation to, the crises and weaknesses of American capitalism, both at home and abroad.

American Marxists have also allowed themselves to fall into the trap of treating the question of violence and non-violence in the Negro struggle in a way that they would never dream of in relation to the class struggle. That is, they have toyed with the idea that the Negroes are a minority who might be massacred if they used other than non-violent methods. This is because American Marxists have always thought of the working class as white and have themselves discriminated against Negroes by hesitating to recognize them as workers.

Now they must face the fact that the Negro struggle in the United States is not just a race struggle. It is not something apart from and long antedating the final struggle for a classless society which is supposed to take place at some future time when American capitalist society is in total crisis.

The goal of the classless society is precisely what has been and is today at the heart of the Negro struggle. It is the Negroes who represent the revolutionary struggle for a classless society—not indeed the classless society of American folk-lore in which every individual is supposed to be able to climb to the top in order to exploit newcomers at the bottom. Every other section of the working class has been to one extent or another assimilated into this American Way of Life. Only the Negroes have been excluded from it and continue to be excluded from it, despite the frantic efforts of Kennedy & Co. to incorporate a chosen few Negroes at the top. It is this exclusion which has given the Negro struggle for a classless society its distinctive revolutionary character. For when the Negroes struggle for a classless society, they struggle that all men may be equal, in production, in consumption, in the community, in the courts, in the schools, in the universities, in transportation, in social activity, in government, and indeed in every sphere of American life.

American Marxists have never been able to grasp this because they have always thought that the social revolution in American must be led by white workers. They have also been afraid that if Negroes started violent revolutionary action, they would find the white workers lined up against them. Even when the Marxists have verbally repudiated the theory of “Black and White, Unite and Fight” this theory and these fears about Negro revolt have remained with them. But the crisis in the United States today and the corresponding momentum of the Negro struggle are such that it is obvious that Negroes are not going to consult whites, workers or not workers, before taking action. They will go their way, doing what they think they must do, taking what actions they feel they must take, and forcing the whites to make up their minds whether, when, and if they are coming along.

The chief need for all Americans is to recognize these facts and to be ready to take bold action along with Negroes, recognizing that the Negroes are the growing revolutionary force in the country, and that just as capitalist production has created new methods of production and new layers of workers, it has also produced new Negroes.

Many, including some Negroes, will say that they do not understand just what the Negroes are fighting for in this period. That is primarily because the Negro struggle, as an offensive social

struggle, is only about eight years old. In those eight years the Negroes have been evolving their own strategy and tactics, not trying to fit into any preconceived pattern, using each and every method, non-violent resistance, violent resistance, moral suasion, economic boycotts, sit-ins, stand-ins, etc., sometimes confusing but more often clarifying the nature of the coming showdown.

Today, as a result of all these struggles, they are learning that their chief weakness is the lack of political power. They do not control one sheriff in the United States, North or South. They have no say about Federal troops, National Guards, city police, FBI, Interstate Commerce Commission, post office authorities, school boards, voting registration, employment commissions. Yet in every issue and in every sphere, and whatever methods they have used, they have found themselves directly up against the corrupt powers-that-be.

Up to now it has been unnatural for the Negroes to think in terms of black political power. Instead they have thought in terms of investing white politicians with power and then putting pressure on them to deal out justice to the Negroes. Now, to Negroes in the South, it is becoming clearly a question of investing blacks with power, and nobody knows this better than the whites who openly admit their fears that this is the inevitable result of Negro voting.

The struggle for black political power is a revolutionary struggle because, unlike the struggle for white power, it is the climax of a ceaseless struggle on the part of Negroes for human rights. Moreover, it comes in a period in the United States when the struggle for human relations rather than for material goods has become the chief task of human beings. The tragedy is that all Americans cannot recognize this and join in this struggle. But the very fact that most white Americans do not recognize it and are in fact opposed to it is what makes it a revolutionary struggle. Because it takes two sides to struggle, the revolution and the counter-revolution.

Chapter 8: The American Revolution

Any social movement starts with the aim of achieving some rights heretofore denied. Sometimes a portion of these rights is achieved without a change in the social structure of the country. When this happens, the movement is not revolutionary, even though it has brought about social change. Such a movement was the CIO. At other times a movement is unable to achieve the rights it seeks without taking power from the existing government and creating a totally new order. When this happens, it is a revolution.

Very few revolutions start with a conscious attempt to take power. No revolution has ever started with everyone in the country agreeing with the goal of the revolutionary movement. It is clashes, both ideological and physical, among segments of the population and usually the whip of the counter-revolution which give the revolution its momentum. Sometimes the revolution is violent, sometimes it is non-violent, but always it is the revolution. Sometimes those in the revolution are conscious of the consequences of their actions, sometimes they are not, but always there is action.

Who will and who will not start a full-scale revolution cannot be foretold. The basis for a revolution is created when the organic structure and conditions within a given country have aroused mass concern. Sometimes the revolution is started by its opponents who by some act arouse the masses to anger and action. Sometimes a very marked improvement in living conditions inculcates in the masses a belief that there is no limit to what they should or can have. Sometimes it is just seeing one segment of the population living so much better than the rest.

No one has ever been able to predict which class or race would start a revolution or how many people would be required to do it. The only certainty is that the success of a revolution depends on the joining in of the working people who make up the bulk of the population.

Marx's theory of revolution was developed in relation to the advanced capitalist countries. The United States is the most advanced capitalist country in the world. Not only that. It is the citadel of world capitalism without which the other capitalist countries could not survive. Therefore any revolutionary who evades facing the specific conditions and realities of American capitalism is like the British workers in Marx's day who were so preoccupied with keeping the Irish workers down that they couldn't fight for their own advancement, or all the American socialists who have been so preoccupied with Stalinism, either pro or con, that they have not sought or been able to find the basis of the revolution that is here, right in front of their eyes, in the most advanced capitalist country in the world. American socialists have never been able to understand why there should be a revolution in the United States when there is such an abundance of commodities in this country. Rather than face this question squarely, they have become refugees in theory, if not in physical fact, from the American Revolution.

Preoccupied, while still living in America, with how revolutionary regimes live up to or fall short of their socialist ideals, American revolutionaries have failed to understand the problems actually faced by these regimes after they come to power. They have not understood the nature of the problem of accumulating capital enough for industrialization, and that the burden of this accumulation must be placed on the backs of the workers—just as it was in all capitalist countries, and especially on the backs of Negro workers in the United States—unless they can get the needed capital from already developed countries like the United States. But the United States will share its resources with the underdeveloped countries only if there is a social revolution in the United States. Which brings us right back to the question of the American Revolution.

The American Revolution does not necessarily have to start from economic grievances. Nor does it have to start with the American working class in the lead. The development of capitalism in the United States has generated more than enough contradictions to pose the question of the total social reorganization of the country. Some of these contradictions relate to sheer poverty and the workers' life in production. Others are just as important and have even wider bearing on the quality of social existence. Man is imaginative and creative. His needs go far beyond the realm of the material.

What is man's greatest human need in the United States today? It is to stop shirking responsibility and start assuming responsibility. When Americans stop doing the one and start doing the other, they will begin to travel the revolutionary road. But to do this they must use as much creative imagination in politics as up to now they have used in production. The fact is that the more imaginative Americans have been in creating new techniques of production, the less imaginative they have been in creating new relations between people. Americans today are like a bunch of ants who have been struggling all summer long to accumulate a harvest and then can't decide how to distribute it and therefore fight among themselves and destroy each other to get at the accumulation.

The greatest obstacle in the way of the American people beginning to behave like human beings rather than like animals is the great American illusion of freedom.

Stop an American and begin to make some serious criticisms of our society, and nine times out of ten his final defense will be: "But this is the freest and finest country in the world." When you probe into what he means by this, it turns out that what he is really talking about is the material goods that he can acquire in exchange for his birthright of political freedom. That is, he is free to have an automobile, a TV, a hi-fi, and all kinds of food, clothing, and drink as long as he doesn't offend anybody he works for or anybody in an official capacity, and as long as he doesn't challenge the accepted pattern of racial, economic, and political relations inside the country or its foreign

policy outside. On these questions most Americans absolve themselves from any responsibility by saying that all that is “politics” and “I am not interested in politics.” What they really mean is that they are afraid to assume political responsibility because it would mean jeopardizing their economic and social status. No people in the world have more to say about the lack of free speech in Russia, China, Cuba, and Ghana. The reason is that as long as they have these other places to talk about, they can evade facing the silent police state that has grown up inside America. If you casually mention the police state to an American, the first thing that comes to his mind is some other country. He doesn’t see his own police state.

That is because in the United States, more than in any other country in the world, every man is a policeman over himself, a prisoner of his own fears. He is afraid to think because he is afraid of what his neighbors might think of what he thinks if they found out what he was thinking, or what his boss might think, or what the police might think, or the FBI, or the CIA. And all because he thinks he has a lot to lose. He thinks he has to choose between material goods and political freedom. And when the two are counterposed, Americans today will choose material goods. Believing they have much to lose, Americans find excuses where there are no excuses, evade issues before the issues arise, shun situations and conversations which could lead to conflict, leave politics and political decisions to the politicians. They will not regain their membership in the human race until they recognize that their greatest need is no longer to make material goods but to make politics.

But politics today in the United States is not just ordinary politics made by ordinary politicians. Not since the 30’s and the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt has there been political statesmanship in the United States. Roosevelt’s problems and therefore his responsibilities, as he made very clear in his First Inaugural Address, were extraordinary. But Roosevelt’s problems were largely domestic. Today, in contrast, every issue, no matter how local or domestic it may seem, has international repercussions inherent in it from the very beginning.

In President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address, he warned the people of the growing power of the “military-industrial complex” inside the country. Ike was speaking mainly of the actual military power and personnel. He did not go into the way this apparatus has been intertwined with those who control the economic processes of the country and with the various investigating agencies which at every level control the thought processes of the population. All together, these now constitute a military-economic-police bloc which was not elected by the people and cannot be held responsible to the people but which makes all the decisions controlling the life of the people.

This bloc has its present power because the United States actually does have its back to the wall both domestically and internationally. Domestically, it is dependent upon the war economy for economic survival as a capitalist country, and has been so dependent since the Great Depression of the 30’s. Internationally, it is dependent upon the military for protection against the world revolutionary movement that is arising among the have-not peoples of the world, and has been so dependent since the 1949 Revolution in China and the Korean War. The United States has lost all the spiritual power which underlies political power of a peaceful kind.

It is the refusal of the American people to face this situation openly and to assume responsibility for tackling it uncompromisingly that gives the military-economic-police bloc its strength. If the secret police were not so secret and silent, it would be much easier to fight. An open enemy is the best enemy. But the fear of the American people of clashing openly with this bloc adds strength to it.

Most secret of all is the CIA, which even members of Congress do not dare question. Yet the CIA has the power to go into a country, organize a war or a revolution or a counter-revolution, recruit among the American people for its schemes; it has the funds and the staff at its disposal to

fight an underground war not only against the Russians but against every country in the world.

The FBI is the secret police force closest to the lives of the people. Unlike the FBI of the 30's which used to be hailed as the great protector of the people against the criminal elements, the FBI today functions chiefly as a political police to pry into the private lives and thoughts of every American.

What the FBI does in complete secrecy, the House Un-American Activities Committee does in semi-secrecy, having the power to drag before it any individual or group which actively challenges the status quo in this country. In this way it dangles over all whom it queries the kind of public suspicion and silent condemnation from which there is only one way for the individual to escape—to prove his or her loyalty to the police state by becoming an informer for it.

If the leap that the American people have to take in order to meet the problems of this new age of abundance were not so great, the powers of the secret police would likewise not be so great. In the 30's the problems were relatively simple. All that was required was that the poor struggle against the rich, who were the capitalists and whose failure was clear and obvious.

Today in the 60's, the struggle is much more difficult. What it requires is that people in every stratum of the population clash not only with the agents of the silent police state but with their own prejudices, their own outmoded ideas, their own fears which keep them from grappling with the new realities of our age. The American people must find a way to insist upon their own right and responsibility to make political decisions and to determine policy in all spheres of social existence—whether it is foreign policy, the work process, education, race relations, community life. The coming struggle is a political struggle to take political power out of the hands of the few and put it into the hands of the many. But in order to get this power into the hands of the many, it will be necessary for the many not only to fight the powerful few but to fight and clash among themselves as well.

Week 8

Black Power

The Black Power movement took a variety of forms, but the reasons for its emergence grew out of what many Blacks at the time considered to be the Civil Rights movement's insufficient radicalism. The mid sixties showcased both the victories of reformism (Civil Rights Act, 1964; Voting Rights Act, 1965) and urban riots demonstrating the yawning gap between Black legal rights and Black emancipation.

Malcolm X came out of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a religious group that had roots in the demise of the Garvey movement. Malcolm X's increasingly political (and increasingly left-wing) posture led the NOI to expel him in 1964, and later to assassinate him in 1965.

Stokely Carmichael became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1966 and popularized the slogan "Black Power." He steered the formerly multiracial, reformist organization towards a more Black nationalist, radical trajectory, expelling whites from the organization.

Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) was a Maoist political group led by Robert F. Williams. Even before the founding of RAM, Williams was an advocate of Black armed self-defense and frequently clashed with the leadership of the NAACP on this issue. He spent time in exile in Cuba and China before returning to the United States.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister best known for his civil rights work, leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and advocacy of nonviolent civil disobedience. However, towards the end of his life (he was assassinated in 1968) he was moving towards a more trenchant critique of American policy, and using more confrontational language such as "nonviolent sabotage" to describe proposed action.

8.1 Malcolm X, Message to the Grassroots (1963)

We want to have just an off-the-cuff chat between you and me—us. We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand. We all agree tonight, all of the speakers have agreed, that America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem, but our people have a very serious problem. America's problem is us. We're her problem. The only reason she has a problem is she doesn't want us here. And every time you look at yourself, be you black, brown, red, or yellow—a so-called Negro—you represent a person who

poses such a serious problem for America because you're not wanted. Once you face this as a fact, then you can start plotting a course that will make you appear intelligent, instead of unintelligent.

What you and I need to do is learn to forget our differences. When we come together, we don't come together as Baptists or Methodists. You don't catch hell 'cause you're a Baptist, and you don't catch hell 'cause you're a Methodist. You don't catch hell 'cause you're a Methodist or Baptist. You don't catch hell because you're a Democrat or a Republican. You don't catch hell because you're a Mason or an Elk. And you sure don't catch hell 'cause you're an American; 'cause if you was an American, you wouldn't catch no hell. You catch hell 'cause you're a black man. You catch hell, all of us catch hell, for the same reason.

So we are all black people, so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, ex-slaves. You are nothing but a ex-slave. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves. You didn't come here on the "Mayflower." You came here on a slave ship—in chains, like a horse, or a cow, or a chicken. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the "Mayflower." You were brought here by the so-called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers. They were the ones who brought you here.

We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have this common enemy, then we unite on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy—the white man. He's an enemy to all of us. I know some of you all think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell.

In Bandung back in, I think, 1954, was the first unity meeting in centuries of black people. And once you study what happened at the Bandung conference, and the results of the Bandung conference, it actually serves as a model for the same procedure you and I can use to get our problems solved. At Bandung all the nations came together. There were dark nations from Africa and Asia. Some of them were Buddhists. Some of them were Muslim. Some of them were Christians. Some of them were Confucianists; some were atheists. Despite their religious differences, they came together. Some were communists; some were socialists; some were capitalists. Despite their economic and political differences, they came together. All of them were black, brown, red, or yellow.

The number-one thing that was not allowed to attend the Bandung conference was the white man. He couldn't come. Once they excluded the white man, they found that they could get together. Once they kept him out, everybody else fell right in and fell in line. This is the thing that you and I have to understand. And these people who came together didn't have nuclear weapons; they didn't have jet planes; they didn't have all of the heavy armaments that the white man has. But they had unity.

They were able to submerge their little petty differences and agree on one thing: That though one African came from Kenya and was being colonized by the Englishman, and another African came from the Congo and was being colonized by the Belgian, and another African came from Guinea and was being colonized by the French, and another came from Angola and was being colonized by the Portuguese. When they came to the Bandung conference, they looked at the Portuguese, and at the Frenchman, and at the Englishman, and at the other—Dutchman—and learned or realized that the one thing that all of them had in common: they were all from Europe, they were all Europeans, blond, blue-eyed and white-skinned. They began to recognize who their enemy was. The same man that was colonizing our people in Kenya was colonizing our people in the Congo. The same one in the Congo was colonizing our people in South Africa, and in Southern Rhodesia, and in Burma, and in India, and in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan. They realized all over the world where the dark man was being oppressed, he was being oppressed by the white man; where the dark man was being

exploited, he was being exploited by the white man. So they got together under this basis—that they had a common enemy.

And when you and I here in Detroit and in Michigan and in America who have been awakened today look around us, we too realize here in America we all have a common enemy, whether he's in Georgia or Michigan, whether he's in California or New York. He's the same man: blue eyes and blond hair and pale skin—same man. So what we have to do is what they did. They agreed to stop quarreling among themselves. Any little spat that they had, they'd settle it among themselves, go into a huddle—don't let the enemy know that you got a disagreement.

Instead of us airing our differences in public, we have to realize we're all the same family. And when you have a family squabble, you don't get out on the sidewalk. If you do, everybody calls you uncouth, unrefined, uncivilized, savage. If you don't make it at home, you settle it at home; you get in the closet—argue it out behind closed doors. And then when you come out on the street, you pose a common front, a united front. And this is what we need to do in the community, and in the city, and in the state. We need to stop airing our differences in front of the white man. Put the white man out of our meetings, number one, and then sit down and talk shop with each other. [That's] all you gotta do.

I would like to make a few comments concerning the difference between the black revolution and the Negro revolution. There's a difference. Are they both the same? And if they're not, what is the difference? What is the difference between a black revolution and a Negro revolution? First, what is a revolution? Sometimes I'm inclined to believe that many of our people are using this word "revolution" loosely, without taking careful consideration [of] what this word actually means, and what its historic characteristics are. When you study the historic nature of revolutions, the motive of a revolution, the objective of a revolution, and the result of a revolution, and the methods used in a revolution, you may change words. You may devise another program. You may change your goal and you may change your mind.

Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence. And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution—what was it based on? The land-less against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost; was no compromise; was no negotiation. I'm telling you, you don't know what a revolution is. 'Cause when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley; you'll get out of the way. The Russian Revolution—what was it based on? Land. The land-less against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed. And you're afraid to bleed. I said, you're afraid to bleed.

[As] long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people. But when it comes time to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls be murdered, you haven't got no blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark. I hate to say this about us, but it's true. How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? How can you justify being nonviolent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your churches are being bombed, and your little girls are being murdered, and at the same time you're going to violent with Hitler, and Tojo, and somebody else that you don't even know?

If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it's wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it's wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us,

and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

The Chinese Revolution—they wanted land. They threw the British out, along with the Uncle Tom Chinese. Yeah, they did. They set a good example. When I was in prison, I read an article—don't be shocked when I say I was in prison. You're still in prison. That's what America means: prison. When I was in prison, I read an article in *Life* magazine showing a little Chinese girl, nine years old; her father was on his hands and knees and she was pulling the trigger 'cause he was an Uncle Tom Chinaman. When they had the revolution over there, they took a whole generation of Uncle Toms—just wiped them out. And within ten years that little girl become a full-grown woman. No more Toms in China. And today it's one of the toughest, roughest, most feared countries on this earth—by the white man. 'Cause there are no Uncle Toms over there.

Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. And when you see that you've got problems, all you have to do is examine the historic method used all over the world by others who have problems similar to yours. And once you see how they got theirs straight, then you know how you can get yours straight. There's been a revolution, a black revolution, going on in Africa. In Kenya, the Mau Mau were revolutionaries; they were the ones who made the word "Uhuru" [Kenyan word for "freedom"]. They were the ones who brought it to the fore. The Mau Mau, they were revolutionaries. They believed in scorched earth. They knocked everything aside that got in their way, and their revolution also was based on land, a desire for land. In Algeria, the northern part of Africa, a revolution took place. The Algerians were revolutionists; they wanted land. France offered to let them be integrated into France. They told France: to hell with France. They wanted some land, not some France. And they engaged in a bloody battle.

So I cite these various revolutions, brothers and sisters, to show you—you don't have a peaceful revolution. You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. [The] only kind of revolution that's nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution based on loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is a desegregated lunch counter, a desegregated theater, a desegregated park, and a desegregated public toilet; you can sit down next to white folks on the toilet. That's no revolution. Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality.

The white man knows what a revolution is. He knows that the black revolution is world-wide in scope and in nature. The black revolution is sweeping Asia, sweeping Africa, is rearing its head in Latin America. The Cuban Revolution—that's a revolution. They overturned the system. Revolution is in Asia. Revolution is in Africa. And the white man is screaming because he sees revolution in Latin America. How do you think he'll react to you when you learn what a real revolution is? You don't know what a revolution is. If you did, you wouldn't use that word.

A revolution is bloody. Revolution is hostile. Revolution knows no compromise. Revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. And you, sitting around here like a knot on the wall, saying, "I'm going to love these folks no matter how much they hate me." No, you need a revolution. Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms, as Reverend Cleage was pointing out beautifully, singing "We Shall Overcome"? Just tell me. You don't do that in a revolution. You don't do any singing; you're too busy swinging. It's based on land. A revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation. These Negroes aren't asking for no nation. They're trying to crawl back on the plantation.

When you want a nation, that's called nationalism. When the white man became involved in a revolution in this country against England, what was it for? He wanted this land so he could set up

another white nation. That's white nationalism. The American Revolution was white nationalism. The French Revolution was white nationalism. The Russian Revolution too—yes, it was—white nationalism. You don't think so? Why [do] you think Khrushchev and Mao can't get their heads together? White nationalism. All the revolutions that's going on in Asia and Africa today are based on what? Black nationalism. A revolutionary is a black nationalist. He wants a nation. I was reading some beautiful words by Reverend Cleage, pointing out why he couldn't get together with someone else here in the city because all of them were afraid of being identified with black nationalism. If you're afraid of black nationalism, you're afraid of revolution. And if you love revolution, you love black nationalism.

To understand this, you have to go back to what [the] young brother here referred to as the house Negro and the field Negro—back during slavery. There was two kinds of slaves. There was the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes—they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good 'cause they ate his food—what he left. They lived in the attic or the basement, but still they lived near the master; and they loved their master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would. The house Negro, if the master said, "We got a good house here," the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here." Whenever the master said "we," he said "we." That's how you can tell a house Negro.

If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss, we sick?" We sick! He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself. And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate," the house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?" That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger." And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about "I'm the only Negro out here." "I'm the only one on my job." "I'm the only one in this school." You're nothing but a house Negro. And if someone comes to you right now and says, "Let's separate," you say the same thing that the house Negro said on the plantation. "What you mean, separate? From America? This good white man? Where you going to get a better job than you get here?" I mean, this is what you say. "I ain't left nothing in Africa," that's what you say. Why, you left your mind in Africa.

On that same plantation, there was the field Negro. The field Negro—those were the masses. There were always more Negroes in the field than there was Negroes in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell. He ate leftovers. In the house they ate high up on the hog. The Negro in the field didn't get nothing but what was left of the insides of the hog. They call 'em "chitt'lin'" nowadays. In those days they called them what they were: guts. That's what you were—a gut-eater. And some of you all still gut-eaters.

The field Negro was beaten from morning to night. He lived in a shack, in a hut; He wore old, castoff clothes. He hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent. That house Negro loved his master. But that field Negro—remember, they were in the majority, and they hated the master. When the house caught on fire, he didn't try and put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die. If someone come to the field Negro and said, "Let's separate, let's run," he didn't say "Where we going?" He'd say, "Any place is better than here." You've got field Negroes in America today. I'm a field Negro. The

masses are the field Negroes. When they see this man's house on fire, you don't hear these little Negroes talking about "our government is in trouble." They say, "The government is in trouble." Imagine a Negro: "Our government"! I even heard one say "our astronauts." They won't even let him near the plant—and "our astronauts"! "Our Navy"—that's a Negro that's out of his mind. That's a Negro that's out of his mind.

Just as the slavemaster of that day used Tom, the house Negro, to keep the field Negroes in check, the same old slavemaster today has Negroes who are nothing but modern Uncle Toms, 20th century Uncle Toms, to keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive and peaceful and nonviolent. That's Tom making you nonviolent. It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So he squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there and 'cause you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. 'Cause someone has taught you to suffer—peacefully.

The white man do the same thing to you in the street, when he want to put knots on your head and take advantage of you and don't have to be afraid of your fighting back. To keep you from fighting back, he gets these old religious Uncle Toms to teach you and me, just like novocaine, suffer peacefully. Don't stop suffering—just suffer peacefully. As Reverend Cleage pointed out, "Let your blood flow In the streets." This is a shame. And you know he's a Christian preacher. If it's a shame to him, you know what it is to me.

There's nothing in our book, the Quran—you call it "Ko-ran"—that teaches us to suffer peacefully. Our religion teaches us to be intelligent. Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion. In fact, that's that old-time religion. That's the one that Ma and Pa used to talk about: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and a head for a head, and a life for a life: That's a good religion. And doesn't nobody resent that kind of religion being taught but a wolf, who intends to make you his meal.

This is the way it is with the white man in America. He's a wolf and you're sheep. Any time a shepherd, a pastor, teach you and me not to run from the white man and, at the same time, teach us not to fight the white man, he's a traitor to you and me. Don't lay down our life all by itself. No, preserve your life. it's the best thing you got. And if you got to give it up, let it be even-steven.

The slavemaster took Tom and dressed him well, and fed him well, and even gave him a little education—a little education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him. Then he used Tom to control them. The same strategy that was used in those days is used today, by the same white man. He takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and make him prominent, build him up, publicize him, make him a celebrity. And then he becomes a spokesman for Negroes—and a Negro leader.

I would like to just mention just one other thing else quickly, and that is the method that the white man uses, how the white man uses these "big guns," or Negro leaders, against the black revolution. They are not a part of the black revolution. They're used against the black revolution.

When Martin Luther King failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia, the civil-rights struggle in America reached its low point. King became bankrupt almost, as a leader. Plus, even financially, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was in financial trouble; plus it was in trouble, period, with the people when they failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia. Other Negro civil-rights leaders of so-called national stature became fallen idols. As they became fallen idols, began to lose their prestige and influence, local Negro leaders began to stir up the masses. In Cambridge, Maryland,

Gloria Richardson; in Danville, Virginia, and other parts of the country, local leaders began to stir up our people at the grassroots level. This was never done by these Negroes, whom you recognize, of national stature. They controlled you, but they never incited you or excited you. They controlled you; they contained you; they kept you on the plantation.

As soon as King failed in Birmingham, Negroes took to the streets. King got out and went out to California to a big rally and raised about—I don't know how many thousands of dollars. [He] come to Detroit and had a march and raised some more thousands of dollars. And recall, right after that [Roy] Wilkins attacked King, accused King and the CORE [Congress Of Racial Equality] of starting trouble everywhere and then making the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] get them out of jail and spend a lot of money; and then they accused King and CORE of raising all the money and not paying it back. This happened; I've got it in documented evidence in the newspaper. Roy started attacking King, and King started attacking Roy, and Farmer started attacking both of them. And as these Negroes of national stature began to attack each other, they began to lose their control of the Negro masses.

And Negroes was out there in the streets. They was talking about [how] we was going to march on Washington. By the way, right at that time Birmingham had exploded, and the Negroes in Birmingham—remember, they also exploded. They began to stab the crackers in the back and bust them up 'side their head—yes, they did. That's when Kennedy sent in the troops, down in Birmingham. So, and right after that, Kennedy got on the television and said “this is a moral issue.” That's when he said he was going to put out a civil-rights bill. And when he mentioned civil-rights bill and the Southern crackers started talking about [how] they were going to boycott or filibuster it, then the Negroes started talking—about what? We're going to march on Washington, march on the Senate, march on the White House, march on the Congress, and tie it up, bring it to a halt; don't let the government proceed. They even said they was going out to the airport and lay down on the runway and don't let no airplanes land. I'm telling you what they said. That was revolution. That was revolution. That was the black revolution.

It was the grass roots out there in the street. [It] scared the white man to death, scared the white power structure in Washington, D. C. to death; I was there. When they found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, they called in Wilkins; they called in Randolph; they called in these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, “Call it off.” Kennedy said, “Look, you all letting this thing go too far.” And Old Tom said, “Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it.” I'm telling you what they said. They said, “I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it.” They said, “These Negroes are doing things on their own. They're running ahead of us.” And that old shrewd fox, he said, “Well If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it.”

A matter of hours went by. They had a meeting at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City. The Carlyle Hotel is owned by the Kennedy family; that's the hotel Kennedy spent the night at, two nights ago; [it] belongs to his family. A philanthropic society headed by a white man named Stephen Currier called all the top civil-rights leaders together at the Carlyle Hotel. And he told them that, “By you all fighting each other, you are destroying the civil-rights movement. And since you're fighting over money from white liberals, let us set up what is known as the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership. Let's form this council, and all the civil-rights organizations will belong to it, and we'll use it for fund-raising purposes.” Let me show you how tricky the white man is. And as soon as they got it formed, they elected Whitney Young as the chairman, and who [do] you think became the co-chairman? Stephen Currier, the white man, a millionaire. Powell was talking about it down at the Cobo [Hall] today. This is what he was talking about. Powell knows it happened.

Randolph knows it happened. Wilkins knows it happened. King knows it happened. Everyone of that so-called Big Six—they know what happened.

Once they formed it, with the white man over it, he promised them and gave them \$800,000 to split up between the Big Six; and told them that after the march was over they'd give them \$700,000 more. A million and a half dollars—split up between leaders that you've been following, going to jail for, crying crocodile tears for. And they're nothing but Frank James and Jesse James and the what-do-you-call-'em brothers.

[As] soon as they got the setup organized, the white man made available to them top public relations experts; opened the news media across the country at their disposal; and then they begin to project these Big Six as the leaders of the march. Originally, they weren't even in the march. You was [sic] talking this march talk on Hastings Street—Is Hastings Street still here?—on Hasting Street. You was talking the march talk on Lenox Avenue, and out on—What you call it?—Fillmore Street, and Central Avenue, and 32nd Street and 63rd Street. That's where the march talk was being talked. But the white man put the Big Six [at the] head of it; made them the march. They became the march. They took it over. And the first move they made after they took it over, they invited Walter Reuther, a white man; they invited a priest, a rabbi, and an old white preacher. Yes, an old white preacher. The same white element that put Kennedy in power—labor, the Catholics, the Jews, and liberal Protestants; [the] same clique that put Kennedy in power, joined the march on Washington.

It's just like when you've got some coffee that's too black, which means it's too strong. What you do? You integrate it with cream; you make it weak. If you pour too much cream in, you won't even know you ever had coffee. It used to be hot, it becomes cool. It used to be strong, it becomes weak. It used to wake you up, now it'll put you to sleep. This is what they did with the march on Washington. They joined it. They didn't integrate it; they infiltrated it. They joined it, became a part of it, took it over. And as they took it over, it lost its militancy. They ceased to be angry. They ceased to be hot. They ceased to be uncompromising. Why, it even ceased to be a march. It became a picnic, a circus. Nothing but a circus, with clowns and all. You had one right here in Detroit—I saw it on television—with clowns leading it, white clowns and black clowns. I know you don't like what I'm saying, but I'm going to tell you anyway. 'Cause I can prove what I'm saying. If you think I'm telling you wrong, you bring me Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph and James Farmer and those other three, and see if they'll deny it over a microphone.

No, it was a sellout. It was a takeover. When James Baldwin came in from Paris, they wouldn't let him talk, 'cause they couldn't make him go by the script. Burt Lancaster read the speech that Baldwin was supposed to make; they wouldn't let Baldwin get up there, 'cause they know Baldwin's liable to say anything. They controlled it so tight—they told those Negroes what time to hit town, how to come, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn't make; and then told them to get out town by sundown. And everyone of those Toms was out of town by sundown. Now I know you don't like my saying this. But I can back it up. It was a circus, a performance that beat anything Hollywood could ever do, the performance of the year. Reuther and those other three devils should get a Academy Award for the best actors 'cause they acted like they really loved Negroes and fooled a whole lot of Negroes. And the six Negro leaders should get an award too, for the best supporting cast.

8.2 Stokely Carmichael, *Black Power* (1966)

Thank you very much. It's a privilege and an honor to be in the white intellectual ghetto of the West. (audience laughter) We wanted to do a couple of things before we started. The first is, that, based on the fact that SNCC, through the articulation of its program by its chairman, has been able to win elections in Georgia, Alabama, Maryland, and by our appearance here will win an election in California, 1968 I'm goin' to run for President of the United States. I just can't make it, 'cause I wasn't born in the United States. That's the only thing holding me back.

We wanted to say that this is a student conference, as it should be, held on a campus and that we're not ever to be caught up in the intellectual masturbation of the question of Black Power. That's a function of people who are advertisers that call themselves reporters. Oh, for my members and friends of the press, my self-appointed white critics, I was reading Mr. Bernard Shaw two days ago, and I came across a very important quote which I think is most apropos for you. He says, "All criticism is a autobiography." Dig yourself. Okay.

The philosophers Camus and Sartre raise the question whether or not a man can condemn himself. The black existentialist philosopher who is pragmatic, Frantz Fanon, answered the question. He said that man could not. Camus and Sartre was not. We in SNCC tend to agree with Camus and Sartre that a man cannot condemn himself. Were he to condemn himself, he would then have to inflict punishment upon himself. An example would be the Nazis. Any prisoner who any of the Nazi prisoners who admitted, after he was caught and incarcerated, that he committed crimes, that he killed all the many people that he killed, he committed suicide. The only ones who were able to stay alive were the ones who never admitted that they committed a crime against people—that is, the ones who rationalized that Jews were not human beings and deserved to be killed, or that they were only following orders.

On a more immediate scene, the officials and the population—the white population—in Neshoba County, Mississippi—that's where Philadelphia is—could not, could not condemn [Sheriff] Rainey, his deputies, and the other fourteen men that killed three human beings. They could not because they elected Mr. Rainey to do precisely what he did, and that for them to condemn him will be for them to condemn themselves.

In a much larger view, SNCC says that white America cannot condemn herself. And since we are liberal, we have done it: You stand condemned. Now, a number of things that arises from that answer of how do you condemn yourselves. Seems to me that the institutions that function in this country are clearly racist, and that they're built upon racism. And the question, then, is how can black people inside of this country move? And then how can white people who say they're not a part of those institutions begin to move? And how then do we begin to clear away the obstacles that we have in this society, that make us live like human beings? How can we begin to build institutions that will allow people to relate with each other as human beings? This country has never done that, especially around the country of white or black.

Now, several people have been upset because we've said that integration was irrelevant when initiated by blacks, and that in fact it was a subterfuge, an insidious subterfuge, for the maintenance of white supremacy. Now we maintain that in the past six years or so, this country has been feeding us a "thalidomide drug of integration," and that some Negroes have been walking down a dream street talking about sitting next to white people; and that that does not begin to solve the problem. That when we went to Mississippi we did not go to sit next to Ross Barnett; we did not go to sit next to Jim Clark; we went to get them out of our way; and that people ought to understand that; that we were never fighting for the right to integrate, we were fighting against white supremacy.

Now, then, in order to understand white supremacy we must dismiss the fallacious notion that white people can give anybody their freedom. No man can give anybody his freedom. A man is born free. You may enslave a man after he is born free, and that is in fact what this country does. It enslaves black people after they're born, so that the only acts that white people can do is to stop denying black people their freedom; that is, they must stop denying freedom. They never give it to anyone.

Now we want to take that to its logical extension, so that we could understand, then, what its relevancy would be in terms of new civil rights bills. I maintain that every civil rights bill in this country was passed for white people, not for black people. For example, I am black. I know that. I also know that while I am black I am a human being, and therefore I have the right to go into any public place. White people didn't know that. Every time I tried to go into a place they stopped me. So some boys had to write a bill to tell that white man, "He's a human being; don't stop him." That bill was for that white man, not for me. I knew it all the time. I knew it all the time.

I knew that I could vote and that that wasn't a privilege; it was my right. Every time I tried I was shot, killed or jailed, beaten or economically deprived. So somebody had to write a bill for white people to tell them, "When a black man comes to vote, don't bother him." That bill, again, was for white people, not for black people. So that when you talk about open occupancy, I know I can live anyplace I want to live. It is white people across this country who are incapable of allowing me to live where I want to live. You need a civil rights bill, not me. I know I can live where I want to live.

So that the failures to pass a civil rights bill isn't because of Black Power, isn't because of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; it's not because of the rebellions that are occurring in the major cities. It is incapability of whites to deal with their own problems inside their own communities. That is the problem of the failure of the civil rights bill.

And so in a larger sense we must then ask, how is it that black people move? And what do we do? But the question in a greater sense is, how can white people who are the majority—and who are responsible for making democracy work—make it work? They have miserably failed to this point. They have never made democracy work, be it inside the United States, Vietnam, South Africa, Philippines, South America, Puerto Rico. Wherever America has been, she has not been able to make democracy work. So that in a larger sense, we not only condemn the country for what it's done internally, but we must condemn it for what it does externally. We see this country trying to rule the world, and someone must stand up and start articulating that this country is not God, and cannot rule the world.

Now then, before we move on we ought to develop the white supremacy attitudes that were either conscious or subconscious thought and how they run rampant through the society today. For example, the missionaries were sent to Africa. They went with the attitude that blacks were automatically inferior. As a matter of fact, the first act the missionaries did, you know, when they get to Africa was to make us cover up our bodies, because they said it got them excited. We couldn't go bare-breasted anymore because they got excited.

Now when the missionaries came to civilize us because we were uncivilized, educate us because we were uneducated, and give us some—some literate studies because we were illiterate—they charged a price. The missionaries came with the Bible, and we had the land. When they left, they had the land, and we still have the Bible. And that has been the rationalization for Western civilization as it moves across the world and stealing and plundering and raping everybody in its path. Their one rationalization is that the rest of the world is uncivilized and they are in fact civilized. And they are uncivilized.

And that runs on today, you see, because what we have today is we have what we call “modern-day Peace Corps missionaries,” and they come into our ghettos and they Head Start, Upward Lift, Bootstrap, and Upward Bound us into white society, ‘cause they don’t want to face the real problem which is a man is poor for one reason and one reason only: ‘cause he does not have money—period. If you want to get rid of poverty, you give people money—period.

And you ought not to tell me about people who don’t work, and you can’t give people money without working, ‘cause if that were true, you’d have to start stopping Rockefeller, Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, the whole of Standard Oil, the Gulf Corp, all of them, including probably a large number of the Board of Trustees of this university. So the question, then, clearly is not whether or not one can work, it’s who has power? Who has power to make his or her acts legitimate? That is all. And that this country, that power is invested in the hands of white people, and they make their acts legitimate. It is now, therefore, for black people to make our acts legitimate.

Now we are now engaged in a psychological struggle in this country, and that is whether or not black people will have the right to use the words they want to use without white people giving their sanction to it. And that we maintain, whether they like it or not, we gonna use the word “Black Power” and let them address themselves to that; but that we are not goin’ to wait for white people to sanction Black Power. We are tired waiting; every time black people move in this country, they’re forced to defend their position before they move. It’s time that the people who are supposed to be defending their position do that. That’s white people. They ought to start defending themselves as to why they have oppressed and exploited us.

Now it is clear that when this country started to move in terms of slavery, the reason for a man being picked as a slave was one reason—because of the color of his skin. If one was black one was automatically inferior, inhuman, and therefore fit for slavery. So that the question of whether or not we are individually suppressed is nonsensical, and it’s a downright lie. We are oppressed as a group because we are black, not because we are lazy, not because we’re apathetic, not because we’re stupid, not because we smell, not because we eat watermelon and have good rhythm (inaudible). We are oppressed because we are black. And in order to get out of that oppression one must wield the group power that one has, not the individual power which this country then sets the criteria under which a man may come into it. That is what is called in this country as integration: “You do what I tell you to do and then we’ll let you sit at the table with us.” And that we are saying that we have to be opposed to that. We must now set up criteria and that if there’s going to be any integration, it’s going to be a two-way thing. If you believe in integration, you can come live in Watts. You can send your children to the ghetto schools. Let’s talk about that. If you believe in integration, then we’re going to start adopting us some white people to live in our neighborhood.

So it is clear that the question is not one of integration or segregation. Integration is a man’s ability to want to move in there by himself. If someone wants to live in a white neighborhood and he is black, that is his choice. It should be his right. It is not because white people will not allow him. So vice versa: If a black man wants to live in the slums, that should be his right. Black people will let him. That is the difference. And it’s a difference on which this country makes a number of logical mistakes when they begin to try to criticize the program articulated by SNCC.

Now we maintain that we cannot be afford to be concerned about six percent of the children in this country, black children, who you allow to come into white schools. We have ninety-four percent who still live in shacks. We are going to be concerned about those ninety-four percent. You ought to be concerned about them, too. The question is, Are we willing to be concerned about those ninety-four percent? Are we willing to be concerned about the black people who will never get to

Berkeley, who will never get to Harvard, and cannot get an education, so you'll never get a chance to rub shoulders with them and say, "Well, he's almost as good as we are; he's not like the others"? The question is, how can white society begin to move to see black people as human beings? I am black, therefore I am; not that I am black and I must go to college to prove myself. I am black, therefore I am. And don't deprive me of anything and say to me that you must go to college before you gain access to X, Y, and Z. It is only a rationalization for one's oppression.

The political parties in this country do not meet the needs of people on a day-to-day basis. The question is, how can we build new political institutions that will become the political expressions of people on a day-to-day basis? The question is, how can you build political institutions that will begin to meet the needs of Oakland, California? And the needs of Oakland, California, is not 1,000 policemen with submachine guns. They don't need that. They need that least of all. The question is, how can we build institutions where those people can begin to function on a day-to-day basis, where they can get decent jobs, where they can get decent houses, and where they can begin to participate in the policy and major decisions that affect their lives? That's what they need, not Gestapo troops, because this is not 1942, and if you play like Nazis, we playin' back with you this time around. Get hip to that.

The question then is, how can white people move to start making the major institutions that they have in this country function the way it is supposed to function? That is the real question. And can white people move inside their own community and start tearing down racism where in fact it does exist? Where it exists. It is you who live in Cicero and stop us from living there. It is white people who stop us from moving into Grenada. It is white people who make sure that we live in the ghettos of this country. It is white institutions that do that. They must change. In order...in order for America to really live on a basic principle of human relationships, a new society must be born. Racism must die, and the economic exploitation of this country of non-white peoples around the world must also die, must also die.

Now there are several programs that we have in the South, most in poor white communities. We're trying to organize poor whites on a base where they can begin to move around the question of economic exploitation and political disfranchisement. We know, we've heard the theory several times, but few people are willing to go into there. The question is, can the white activist not try to be a Pepsi generation who comes alive in the black community, but can he be a man who's willing to move into the white community and start organizing where the organization is needed? Can he do that? The question is, can the white society or the white activist disassociate himself with two clowns who waste time parrying with each other rather than talking about the problems that are facing people in this state? Can you disassociate yourself with those clowns and start to build new institutions that will eliminate all idiots like them.

And the question is, if we are going to do that when and where do we start, and how do we start? We maintain that we must start doing that inside the white community. Our own personal position politically is that we don't think the Democratic Party represents the needs of black people. We know it don't. And that if, in fact, white people really believe that, the question is, if they're going to move inside that structure, how are they going to organize around a concept of whiteness based on true brotherhood and based on stopping exploitation, economic exploitation, so that there will be a coalition base for black people to hook up with? You cannot form a coalition based on national sentiment. That is not a coalition. If you need a coalition to redress itself to real changes in this country, white people must start building those institutions inside the white community. And that is the real question, I think, facing the white activists today. Can they, in fact, begin to move into and tear down the institutions which have put us all in a trick bag that we've been into for the last

hundred years?

I don't think that we should follow what many people say that we should fight to be leaders of tomorrow. Frederick Douglass said that the youth should fight to be leaders today. And God knows we need to be leaders today, 'cause the men who run this country are sick, are sick. So that can we on a larger sense begin now, today, to start building those institutions and to fight to articulate our position, to fight to be able to control our universities—we need to be able to do that—and to fight to control the basic institutions which perpetuate racism by destroying them and building new ones? That's the real question that face us today, and it is a dilemma because most of us do not know how to work, and that the excuse that most white activists find is to run into the black community.

Now we maintain that we cannot have white people working in the black community, and we mean it on a psychological ground. The fact is that all black people often question whether or not they are equal to whites, because every time they start to do something, white people are around showing them how to do it. If we are going to eliminate that for the generation that comes after us, then black people must be seen in positions of power, doing and articulating for themselves, for themselves.

That is not to say that one is a reverse racist; it is to say that one is moving in a healthy ground; it is to say what the philosopher Sartre says: One is becoming an "antiracist racist." And this country can't understand that. Maybe it's because it's all caught up in racism. But I think what you have in SNCC is an anti-racist racism. We are against racists. Now if everybody who is white see themselves as a racist and then see us against him, they're speaking from their own guilt position, not ours, not ours.

Now then, the question is, How can we move to begin to change what's going on in this country. I maintain, as we have in SNCC, that the war in Vietnam is an illegal and immoral war. And the question is, what can we do to stop that war? What can we do to stop the people who, in the name of our country, are killing babies, women, and children? What can we do to stop that? And I maintain that we do not have the power in our hands to change that institution, to begin to recreate it, so that they learn to leave the Vietnamese people alone, and that the only power we have is the power to say, "Hell no!" to the draft. We have to say to ourselves that there is a higher law than the law of a racist named McNamara. There is a higher law than the law of a fool named Rusk. And there's a higher law than the law of a buffoon named Johnson. It's the law of each of us. It's the law of each of us. It is the law... It is the law of each of us saying that we will not allow them to make us hired killers. We will stand pat. We will not kill anybody that they say kill. And if we decide to kill, we're going to decide who we gonna kill. And this country will only be able to stop the war in Vietnam when the young men who are made to fight it begin to say, "Hell, no, we ain't going."

Now then, there's a failure because the Peace Movement has been unable to get off the college campuses where everybody has a 2S and not gonna get drafted anyway. And the question is, how can you move out of that into the white ghettos of this country and begin to articulate a position for those white students who do not want to go. We cannot do that. It is something, sometimes ironic, that many of the peace groups have beginning to call us violent and say they can no longer support us, and we are in fact the most militant organization [for] peace or civil rights or human rights against the war in Vietnam in this country today. There isn't one organization that has begun to meet our stance on the war in Vietnam, 'cause we not only say we are against the war in Vietnam; we are against the draft! We are against the draft! No man has the right to take a man for two years and train him to be a killer. A man should decide what he wants to do with his life.

So the question then is it becomes crystal clear for black people because we can easily say that anyone fighting in the war in Vietnam is nothing but a black mercenary, and that's all he is. Any time a black man leaves a country where he can't vote to supposedly deliver the vote for somebody else, he's a black mercenary. Any time a...any time a black man leaves this country, gets shot in Vietnam on foreign ground, and returns home and you won't give him a burial in his own homeland, he's a black mercenary, a black mercenary.

And that even if I were to believe the lies of Johnson, if I were to believe his lies that we're fighting to give democracy to the people in Vietnam, as a black man living in this country I wouldn't fight to give this to anybody! I wouldn't give it to anybody! So that we have to use our bodies and our minds in the only way that we see fit. We must begin like the like the philosopher Camus to come alive by saying "No!" That is the only act in which we begin to come alive, and we have to say "No!" to many, many things in this country. This country is a nation of thieves. It has stole everything it has, beginning with black people, beginning with black people. And that the question is, how can we move to start changing this country from what it is, a nation of thieves. This country cannot justify any longer its existence. We have become the policemen of the world. The marines are at our disposal to always bring democracy, and if the Vietnamese don't want democracy, well dammit, "We'll just wipe them the hell out, 'cause they don't deserve to live if they won't have our way of life."

There is then in a larger sense, what do you do on your university campus? Do you raise questions about the hundred black students who were kicked off campus a couple of weeks ago? Eight hundred? Eight hundred? And how does that question begin to move? Do you begin to relate to people outside of the ivory tower and university wall? Do you think you're capable of building those human relationships, as the country now stands? You're fooling yourself. It is impossible for white and black people to talk about building a relationship based on humanity when the country is the way it is, when the institutions are clearly against us.

We have taken all the myths of this country and we've found them to be nothing but downright lies. This country told us that if we worked hard we would succeed, and if that were true we would own this country lock, stock, and barrel—lock, stock, and barrel—lock, stock, and barrel. It is we who have picked the cotton for nothing. It is we who are the maids in the kitchens of liberal white people. It is we who are the janitors, the porters, the elevator men. It is we who sweep up your college floors. Yes, it is we who are the hardest workers and the lowest paid, and the lowest paid.

And that it is nonsensical for people to start talking about human relationships until they're willing to build new institutions. Black people are economically insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you begin to build an economic coalition? Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure black people they so much love? Then if you're not, are you willing to start building new institutions that will provide economic security for black people? That's the question we want to deal with. That's the question we want to deal with.

We have to seriously examine the histories that we have been told. But we have something more to do than that. American students are perhaps the most politically unsophisticated students in the world, in the world, in the world. Across every country in this world, while we were growing up, students were leading the major revolutions of their countries. We have not been able to do that. They have been politically aware of their existence. In South America our neighbors down below the border have one every twenty-four hours just to remind us that they're politically aware.

And we have been unable to grasp it because we've always moved in the field of morality and love while people have been politically jiving with our lives. And the question is, how do we now move politically and stop trying to move morally? You can't move morally against a man like Brown and

Reagan. You've got to move politically to put 'em out of business. You've got to move politically.

You can't move morally against Lyndon Baines Johnson because he is an immoral man. He doesn't know what it's all about. So you've got to move politically. You've got to move politically. And that we have to begin to develop a political sophistication, which is not to be a parrot: "The two-party system is the best party in the world." There is a difference between being a parrot and being politically sophisticated. We have to raise questions about whether or not we do need new types of political institutions in this country, and we in SNCC maintain that we need them now. We need new political institutions in this country. At any time, any time, Lyndon Baines Johnson can head a party which has in it Bobby Kennedy, Wayne Morse, Eastland, Wallace, and all those other supposed-to-be-liberal cats, there's something wrong with that party. They're moving politically, not morally. And that if that party refuses to seat black people from Mississippi and goes ahead and seats racists like Eastland and his clique, it is clear to me that they're moving politically, and that one cannot begin to talk morality to people like that.

We must begin to think politically and see if we can have the power to impose and keep the moral values that we hold high. We must question the values of this society, and I maintain that black people are the best people to do that because we have been excluded from that society. And the question is, we ought to think whether or not we want to become a part of that society. That's what we want to do.

And that that is precisely what it seems to me that the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee is doing. We are raising questions about this country. I do not want to be a part of the American pie! The American pie means raping South Africa, beating Vietnam, beating South America, raping the Philippines, raping every country you've been in. I don't want any of your blood money! I don't want it, don't want to be part of that system. And the question is, how do we raise those questions? How do we raise (inaudible). How do we begin to raise them?

We have grown up and we are the generation that has found this country to be a world power, that has found this country to be the wealthiest country in the world. We must question how she got her wealth? That's what we're questioning, and whether or not we want this country to continue being the wealthiest country in the world at the price of raping every, everybody else across the world. That's what we must begin to question. And that because black people are saying we do not now want to become a part of you, we are called reverse racists. Ain't that a gas?

Now then, we want to touch on nonviolence because we see that again as the failure of white society to make nonviolence work. I was always surprised at Quakers who came to Alabama and counseled me to be nonviolent, but didn't have the guts to start talking to James Clark to be nonviolent. That is where nonviolence needs to be preached—to Jim Clark, not to black people. They have already been nonviolent too many years. The question is, can white people conduct their nonviolent schools in Cicero where they belong to be conducted, not among black people in Mississippi? Can they conduct it among the white people in Grenada? Six-foot-two men who kick little black children—can you conduct nonviolent schools there? That is the question that we must raise, not that you conduct nonviolence among black people. Can you name me one black man today who's killed anybody white and is still alive? Even after rebellion, when some black brothers throw some bricks and bottles, ten thousand of us has to pay the crime, 'cause when the white policeman comes in, anybody who's black is arrested, "cause we all look alike."

So that we have to raise those questions. We, the youth of this country, must begin to raise those questions. And we must begin to move to build new institutions that's going to speak to the needs of people who need it. We are going to have to speak to change the foreign policy of this country. One of the problems with the peace movement is that it's just too caught up in Vietnam,

and that if we pulled out the troops from Vietnam this week, next week you'd have to get another peace movement for Santo Domingo. And the question is, how do you begin to articulate needs to change the foreign policy of this country—a policy that is decided upon race, a policy on which decisions are made upon getting economic wealth at any price, at any price.

Now we articulate that we therefore have to hook up with black people around the world, and that that hookup is not only psychological, but becomes very real. If South America today were to rebel, and black people were to shoot the hell out of all the white people there—as they should, as they should—then Standard Oil would crumble tomorrow. If South Africa were to go today, Chase Manhattan Bank would crumble tomorrow. If Zimbabwe, which is called Rhodesia by white people, were to go tomorrow, General Electric would cave in on the East Coast. The question is, how do we stop those institutions that are so willing to fight against “Communist aggression” but closes their eyes to racist oppression? That is the question that you raise. Can this country do that?

Now, many people talk about pulling out of Vietnam. What will happen? If we pull out of Vietnam, there will be one less aggressor in there—we won't be there, we won't be there. And so the question is, how do we articulate those positions? And we cannot begin to articulate them from the same assumptions that the people in the country speak, 'cause they speak from different assumptions than I assume what the youth in this country are talking about. That we're not talking about a policy or aid or sending Peace Corps people in to teach people how to read and write and build houses while we steal their raw materials from them. Is that what we're talking about? 'Cause that's all we do. What underdeveloped countries needs information on how to become industrialized, so they can keep their raw materials where they have it, produce them and sell it to this country for the price it's supposed to pay; not that we produce it and sell it back to them for a profit and keep sending our modern day missionaries in, calling them the sons of Kennedy. And that if the youth are going to participate in that program, how do you raise those questions where you begin to control that Peace Corps program? How do you begin to raise them?

How do we raise the questions of poverty? The assumptions of this country is that if someone is poor, they are poor because of their own individual blight, or they weren't born on the right side of town; they had too many children; they went in the army too early; or their father was a drunk, or they didn't care about school, or they made a mistake. That's a lot of nonsense. Poverty is well calculated in this country. It is well calculated, and the reason why the poverty program won't work is because the calculators of poverty are administering it. That's why it won't work.

So how can we, as the youth in the country, move to start tearing those things down? We must move into the white community. We are in the black community. We have developed a movement in the black community. The challenge is that the white activist has failed miserably to develop the movement inside of his community. And the question is, can we find white people who are going to have the courage to go into white communities and start organizing them? Can we find them? Are they here and are they willing to do that? Those are the questions that we must raise for the white activist. And we're never going to get caught up in questions about power. This country knows what power is. It knows it very well. And it knows what Black Power is 'cause it deprived black people of it for four hundred years. So it knows what Black Power is.

But the question of, why do black people, why do white people in this country associate Black Power with violence? And the question is because of their own inability to deal with “blackness.” If we had said “Negro Power” nobody would get scared. (laughter) Everybody would support it. Or if we said power for colored people, everybody'd be for that, but it is the word “Black,” it is the word “Black” that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine—their problem, their problem.

Now there's one modern day lie that we want to attack and then move on very quickly and that is the lie that says anything all black is bad. Now, you're all a college university crowd. You've taken your basic logic course. You know about a major premise and minor premise. So people have been telling me anything all black is bad. Let's make that our major premise.

Major premise: Anything all black is bad.

Minor premise or particular premise: I am all black.

Therefore ...

I'm never going to be put in that trick bag; I am all black and I'm all good. (Laughter). Anything all black is not necessarily bad. Anything all black is only bad when you use force to keep whites out. Now that's what white people have done in this country, and they're projecting their same fears and guilt on us, and we won't have it, we won't have it. Let them handle their own fears and their own guilt. Let them find their own psychologists. We refuse to be the therapy for white society any longer. We have gone mad trying to do it. We have gone stark raving mad trying to do it.

I look at Dr. King on television every single day, and I say to myself: "Now there is a man who's desperately needed in this country. There is a man full of love. There is a man full of mercy. There is a man full of compassion." But every time I see Lyndon on television, I said, "Martin, baby, you've got a long way to go."

So that the question stands as to what we are willing to do, how we are willing to say "no" to withdraw from that system and begin within our community to start to function and to build new institutions that will speak to our needs. In Lowndes County, we developed something called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. It is a political party. The Alabama law says that if you have a Party you must have an emblem. We chose for the emblem a black panther, a beautiful black animal which symbolizes the strength and dignity of black people, an animal that never strikes back until he's backed so far into the wall, he's got nothing to do but spring out. Yeah. And when he springs he does not stop.

Now there is a party in Alabama called the Alabama Democratic Party. It is all white. It has as its emblem a white rooster and the words "white supremacy" for the write. Now the gentlemen of the press, because they're advertisers, and because most of them are white, and because they're produced by that white institution, never called the Lowndes Country Freedom Organization by its name, but rather they call it the Black Panther Party. Our question is, why don't they call the Alabama Democratic Party the "White Cock Party"? (applause, laughter) It's fair to us, it's fair to us. It is clear to me that that just points out America's problem with sex and color, not our problem, not our problem. And it is now white America that is going to deal with those problems of sex and color.

If we were to be real and to be honest, we would have to admit, we would have to admit that most people in this country see things black and white. We have to do that. All of us do. We live in a country that's geared that way. White people would have to admit that they are afraid to go into a black ghetto at night. They are afraid. That's a fact. They're afraid because they'd be "beat up," "lynched," "looted," "cut up," etcetera, etcetera. It happens to black people inside the ghetto every day, incidentally, and white people are afraid of that. So you get a man to do it for you—a policeman. And now you figure his mentality, when he's afraid of black people. The first time a black man jumps, that white man gonna shoot him. He's gonna shoot him. So police brutality is going to exist on that level because of the incapability of that white man to see black people come together and to live in the conditions. This country is too hypocritical and that we cannot adjust ourselves to its hypocrisy.

The only time I hear people talk about nonviolence is when black people move to defend them-

selves against white people. Black people cut themselves every night in the ghetto—don't anybody talk about nonviolence. Lyndon Baines Johnson is busy bombing the hell of out Vietnam—don't nobody talk about nonviolence. White people beat up black people every day—don't nobody talk about nonviolence. But as soon as black people start to move, the double standard comes into being.

You can't defend yourself. That's what you're saying, 'cause you show me a man who, who would advocate aggressive violence that would be able to live in this country. Show him to me. The double standards again come into itself. Isn't it ludicrous and hypocritical for the political chameleon who calls himself a vice president in this country to—to stand up before this country and say, "Looting never got anybody anywhere"? Isn't it hypocritical for Lyndon to talk about looting, that you can't accomplish anything by looting and you must accomplish it by the legal ways? What does he know about legality? Ask Ho Chi Minh, he'll tell you.

So that in conclusion we want to say that number one, it is clear to me that we have to wage a psychological battle on the right for black people to define their own terms, define themselves as they see fit, and organize themselves as they see it.

Now the question is, how is the white community going to begin to allow for that organizing, because once they start to do that, they will also allow for the organizing that they want to do inside their community. It doesn't make a difference, 'cause we're going to organize our way anyway. We're goin' to do it. The question is, how are we goin' to facilitate those matters, whether it's going to be done with a thousand policemen with submachine guns, or whether or not it's goin' to be done in a context where it is allowed to be done by white people warding off those policemen. That is the question.

And the question is, how are white people who call themselves activists ready to start move into the white communities on two counts: on building new political institutions to destroy the old ones that we have, and to move around the concept of white youth refusing to go into the army? So that we can start, then, to build a new world. It is ironic to talk about civilization in this country. This country is uncivilized. It needs to be civilized. It needs to be civilized.

And that we must begin to raise those questions of civilization: What it is? And who do it? And so we must urge you to fight now to be the leaders of today, not tomorrow. We've got to be the leaders of today. This country, this country is a nation of thieves. It stands on the brink of becoming a nation of murderers. We must stop it. We must stop it. We must stop it. We must stop it.

And then, therefore, in a larger sense there's the question of black people. We are on the move for our liberation. We have been tired of trying to prove things to white people. We are tired of trying to explain to white people that we're not going to hurt them. We are concerned with getting the things we want, the things that we have to have to be able to function. The question is, can white people allow for that in this country?

The question is, will white people overcome their racism and allow for that to happen in this country? If that does not happen, brothers and sisters, we have no choice but to say very clearly, "Move over, or we goin' to move on over you." Thank you.

8.3 Revolutionary Action Movement, The 12 Point Program of RAM (1964)

1. Development of A National Black Student Organization Movement

ASM, the Afro-American Student Movement, the student branch of RAM was formed to organize black students into a strong, well-organized student movement that can fight against injustices, against Afro-American students and black people in general.

PURPOSES:

1. To educate the Afro-American to the economic, political, and cultural basis of the racial situation in the United States and the world.
2. To develop unity with Africans in the United States and the world.
3. To unite and organize Afro-American students to become active in the Afro-American Liberation Struggle.

These purposes would develop revolutionary cadres in the high schools, junior high and colleges. The climax of such a program would be the development of a nationwide black student school strike which would repudiate the educational system. This strike would be over what black students are and are not taught. ASM's purpose is to show black students that the only way to succeed in life is to cause a revolution in this country. ASM would develop groups around black history, students' rights, and also over conditions under which Afro-American students must operate. This all-black national student organization would build to establish total social dislocation. With students demonstrating the guerrilla force will have a base for mass support. It should be noted that this support is coming from youth. This will eventually rally young black workers and the unemployed. ASM will politicize the black student community and will serve as the vanguard in the struggle. When the Afro-American student strike is initiated it will be left to RAM to have other segments of the black community to strike in sympathy. If guerrilla warfare is being waged, this strike would be in support of the guerrillas. ASM on campus would develop political parties to take over student government. The objective is to obtain power in black colleges.

2. Development of Ideology (Freedom) Schools

The purpose of the "Freedom" schools would be to develop cadres, with the revolutionary theory and doctrine of RAM. These schools will teach the history of the movement, current events, political theory methods of social action, methods of self-defense, basic principles of guerrilla warfare, techniques of social dislocation, propaganda techniques and indoctrination, black history, etc. Essentially the schools will be political.

3. Development of Rifle Clubs

The rifle clubs will be made up of local veterans and other people from community. The purpose of the rifle club is to develop a black militia capable of protecting the black community. This militia would work with the liberation army and would serve as a base for the establishment of a community government.

4. Development of Liberation Army (Guerrilla Youth Force)

The purpose of the Liberation Army is to carry out political, economic, physical overthrow of this system. The Liberation Army's role is to take over cities, cause complete social dislocation of communications, etc. "Our countryside is the cities all over the country." Therefore, the major part of guerrilla warfare in the U.S.A. will take place in the cities. The cities are the pockets of power and heart of the economy.

5. Development of Propaganda, Training Centers And National Organ

The purpose of this center is to train cadre in techniques and methods of propaganda and also to act as a center for the movement. Classes in intelligence, etc., will be taught. The two most important things are a press and a publishing company. Black America is RAM's national organ. It will act as an organizer and coordinator for the movement. It will be a journal of ideas and direction.

6. Development of Underground Vanguard

RAM can be classified as an underground vanguard. All RAM members will be working to spread the vanguard as far as possible. The purpose is to develop a revolutionary machine that is capable of continuing the revolution if the leader or leaders are wiped out.

7. Development of Black Workers "Liberation" Unions

The purpose of the liberation movements are to fight for better conditions on jobs, to organize Afro-American to spy, etc., for the purpose of a national strike, etc. Women's leagues will also play an important role in the national strike. The purpose of Women's leagues is to organize black women who work in white's homes.

8. Development of Block Organization (Cell)

Our plan is to have black community organized by blocks. A person's job, once becoming a member of RAM, is to organize his or her block. This can be done by telling friends about RAM, having informal meetings or parties discussing issues, etc., and/or having a RAM field organizer on the scene to make new contacts. Once two or more RAM members are in one block they become a cell which works in the neighborhood to make the cell larger and to make more cells. Once a group of cells are developed they make a section. This will be left to the judgment of local cadre.

9. Development of Nation Within Nation Concept, Government In Exile, Robert Williams In Exile

RAM's position is that the Afro-American is not a citizen of the U.S.A., denied his rights, but rather he is a colonial subject enslaved. This position says that the black people in the U.S.A. are a captive nation suppressed and that their fight is not for integration into the white community but one of national liberation. RAM's program is one of overthrow meaning simply the overthrow of white rule, capitalist rule, in other words, white America by black America. Stated even simpler, it means the black man taking over this country. To do this we will have our government already in exile, of which Robert Williams is leader. Also RAM's job is to educate the black community to who Robert Williams is and what he stands for. The program will build up for Robert Williams for

President in '68 in the black community, signifying a complete repudiation of the existing political system.

10. Development of War Fund (Political Economy)

The political economy and war fund was developed to build our war machine. The political economy works as follows: each person capable makes a weekly pledge. From this pledge comes a weekly sum to keep the war fund going, thus we have a political economy. Also fund raising activities and methods will be used to develop the war fund.

11. Development of Black Farmer Coops

In the delta area (black belt) in the South, especially Mississippi, this is necessary. This can keep a community and guerrilla forces going for a while.

12. Development Of Army Of Black Unemployed

The brothers and sisters who are unemployed are an army to be organized. The struggle should put continued pressure on the Federal government by demonstrating North and South against racial discrimination on Federal backed industry. Also in the North, the struggle against union discrimination will bring things to a head.

8.4 Robert F. Williams, Speech in Beijing (1966)

Brothers, Sisters, Patriots, Revolutionaries:

[...] Chairman Mao Tse-tung's statement of August 8, 1963 gave inspiration to a people long and brutally oppressed and dehumanized, then laboring under the masochist-like philosophy of neo-Gandhism. His words gave impetus to a floundering and feeble movement of armed self-defence. And today all of the reactionary world is shocked and terrified by the turbulent winds of ever increasing armed resistance now sweeping the mighty fortress of savage imperialism and beastly racism. In racist America's mighty northern cities, in the small towns, in the countryside, in the dark and deep jungle wilderness of the southland, from coast to coast, oppressed and dehumanized black people are meeting oppressive racist terrorist's violence with revolutionary violence. The thunder of BLACK POWER echoes throughout the land. A mighty firestorm sweeps through the ghettos rife with rebellion. In their paradise of stolen wealth, ringed by massive arsenals of horrible death weapons, the tyrannical kings of imperialism tremble from the terrifying shock of a confrontation with wretched and angry slaves, armed with a common household match and a bottle of gasoline.

What is the meaning of this cry BLACK POWER in a land dominated by the unmerciful power of white intruders who murdered and all but exterminated the rightful owners, the American Indians? Black Power means that black men want to have some control over their own lives, to have a respected voice in public affairs that affect them. We resent being a colonial people, treated as third class citizens in our native land. We resent being forbidden to speak for ourselves, even in black belts where we constitute as much as 85 percent of the population. We resent being deformed by a white man's mold in a degenerate white supremacy society that derides and belittles our African heritage and make us ashamed of our ethnic characteristics. Black Power is the vehicle by which we hope to reach a stage wherein we can be proud black people without the necessity of an

apology for our non-Anglo-Saxon features. The dominant society in racist America is reactionary, imperialist, racist, and decadent and we wish to disassociate ourselves from it. Black Power is a dissident force challenging the racist white power structure that is so heinously exterminating the people of Vietnam and threatening the world with nuclear destruction.

We have been victims of white racism for 400 years in the new world. We have been victims of racist barbarism for almost 200 years under the present form of government. Our people are slaughtered like swine on the main streets of racist America. Our churches and homes have been bombed. Our women raped with impunity. Our men have been emasculated. We are hated and murdered for no other reason than being born black and because we refuse to commend and love our savage oppressors, we are called racists.

We are oppressed people. Our objective is to destroy the hurtful stranglehold of our enemy oppressors. An opponent without the courage to designate his enemy by his true characteristics cannot expect to confront and defeat him. We propose to call our enemies what they are. We propose to rally our people and fight on this basis. We do not propose to mince our words for the sake of peaceful coexistence. It is a natural law that a humble lamb cannot peacefully coexist with a rabid wolf in close proximity.

Yes, we have some white Americans with us in our struggle. They are our true brothers. These revolutionaries understand and share our anger. They know it is justified. Their spirit is an extension of the glorious spirit of the great and noble antislavery fighter, John Brown. Yes, they too are a hated and persecuted minority people in Johnson's majority mob rule Hitlerite jungle society. Yes, and like all other peoples we have enemies in our ranks. We have black traitors who practice treason for 30 pieces of silver. We have black Judases, insensate running dogs for the Johnson administration and its racist white power structure. Like their white puppet masters, these black puppets too have days that are numbered.

Our wrath is as intense against the black lackeys of our white oppressors as it is against the white supremacy oppressors themselves. These mercenary Uncle Toms are the most vocal nonviolent peace peddlers in the storm centers of racist America today. The ghettos are ablaze but they advocate peaceful submission to continued tyranny and oppression.

Johnson, the great civil rights advocate, the former senator from the racist state of Texas, who as senator voted against every civil rights bill that came before the U.S. Senate, claimed to be a modern day Moses to black Americans so long as they passively allowed themselves to be mauled and maimed by white supremacy brutes and thugs. But now, with brutal white supremacy Federal Power, he threatens those who defend themselves, their homes, and their women and children. Mr. Johnson, the big daddy white supremacist, would remind our people that we are a minority and the brutal racist white savages are a majority. Like his fellow-traveling Ku Klux Klansmen, he endeavors to frighten and intimidate us by the mere numbers of our eternal oppressors. In the same fashion that Mr. Johnson would like to intimidate the Chinese people with a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons, he is endeavoring to intimidate the black American by alluding to great hordes of white supremacists who are ready and willing to exterminate our people. We say to Mr. Johnson that intimidation, violence, and brutality will not stop the raging fires in the people's liberation struggle. The only force on earth powerful enough to halt the flames engulfing ghettos and main streets of racist America consists of fair play, brotherhood, equality, and justice.

We serve notice on big daddy Texas Lyndon B. Johnson that he can no more intimidate the Afro-American people with his threat of unleashing his great hordes of mad-dog racists than he can intimidate the Chinese people with the threat of unleashing a nuclear attack. The day when brutal white racist oppressors and imperialists can frighten colored peoples into submission by threats of

savage violence are gone forever!

We revolutionary Afro-Americans respond to Mr. Johnson and his Ku Klux Klan fraternity of white supremacy with the cry of BLACK POWER, FREEDOM NOW! JUSTICE! We proclaim our inalienable right to live as human beings and we shall implement our demand with blood and fire. Yes, Mr. Johnson, we are a minority but more than that we are an oppressed minority determined at all costs to be free, and we are resolved to pay any price, to perform any task, and to go to any length for our freedom.

Yes, we are a minority but we are a minority with the power of a righteous cause and justice on our side. We are a minority marching in the endless files of the great multiracial masses of the invincible anti-imperialist and antiracist forces of the world. For the benefit of Mr. Johnson, who puts so much stock in numbers, we remind him once again, in the words a great people's leader a liberator whose words, thought, and teachings stand as impeccable in the turbulent winds of time as the mighty Rock of Gibraltar, yes, we remind him once again that our great leader and teacher, Chairman Mao Tse-tung has said:

"... We are in the majority and they are in the minority. At most, they make up less than ten percent of the three thousand million population of the world. I am firmly convinced that, with the support of more than ninety percent of the people of the world, the American Negroes will be victorious in their just struggle. The evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and thrived with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the black people."

Today, in the social jungle of racist America the rights of colored people are less respected than those of common street dogs. The law and the kangaroo courts of the so-called free world of "Christian" democracy protect the rights of common street dogs and other dumb animals but there is not a single court of law that dispenses even-handed justice and unbiased constitutional and human rights to colored Americans. The long, brutal, and miserable plight of our people throughout the history of barbaric America encompasses one of the most shameful and savage chapters in the history of slavery and man's injustice to man.

The dominant class in racist America is one of the most hypocritical the world has ever seen. It captured the African in Africa, enslaved him, ripped his culture from him, raped him, reproduced from him, completely dehumanized him, and reduced him to the level of beast of burden and stamped him with the name Negro as a tribute to the white man's creation and invention of a new implement of agriculture and an instrument of labour. And all the while, he promoted this brutal slavery, he proclaimed himself architect of democracy and a Christian society. All the while, he brutally and savagely exterminated the American Indian and piously proclaimed Thanksgiving to his white god for being so generous in blessing him with the bounty of the Indian's rich land and paradise. He built a brutal imperialist prison wall around the peoples of Latin America and piously named it the protective Monroe Doctrine. He stretched his bloody hand to Asia and arrogantly called it an "Open Door Policy."

The Open Door Policy was the policy of an armed bandit at the door of a peaceful man. Today, the same bandit rapes and plunders the land the Vietnam, murders defenseless women and children and exterminates the people in the name of "free world Christian democracy."

The same bandit who exterminated and starved the American Indian on his own native soil now piously proclaims to practice charity to the nation of India in a hypocritical effort to use them in his campaign to subdue and enslave the peoples of Asia. What is the nature of his democracy? What does such a beastly, imperialist, racist savage know about democracy? Should not democracy, like charity, start first at home, and then spread abroad? What is the democracy of the Black

American captives in the miserable ghettos, in the cotton fields of Mississippi, battered by the savage policeman's club in Washington, D.C.? What is the democracy of the Puerto Ricans, of the Mexicans, and of the American Indians in racist America? Only the most naive can believe the empty words and promise of such a morally bankrupt charlatan.

Deceptive American white supremacy is personified by hypocrites like Bobby Kennedy, a sophisticated huckster and charlatan of the first magnitude who struts and sways into the hotbed of African white supremacy and colonialism, hugging and kissing black babies and masquerading as a great white father and savior of the black Africans. Mr. Kennedy's actions in racist America are quite a contrast to his deceitful conduct in Africa. When Mr. Kennedy served as the attorney general of the U.S.A. he was sworn to uphold the right of equal protection under law, yet he collaborated with the most barbaric racists in the nation. He entered into a "white gentleman's agreement" with the notorious racist governor of Mississippi, Ross Barnett. Defenseless and helpless black women and children were bombed, gassed, clubbed, raped, and murdered on the main streets of racist America and Mr. Kennedy is yet to punish a single white supremacist heathen transgressor. As attorney general he did nothing about the fact that Africans were being beaten in the United States, even the diplomats assigned to the United Nations.

It is strange indeed how Mr. Kennedy can perform in the racist chorus of those who chant slogans of hatred, vilification, and dehumanization for black people in America while proclaiming his pretended great love for black humanity in Africa. Such is the nature of a deceptive and barbaric Yankee.

In America, Mr. Kennedy publicly proclaims himself to be opposed to black nationalism. In his white supremacy logic, he calls it racism in reverse. Black nationalism is a survival reaction to white nationalism. White nationalism transcends religious, class, social, and political lines. The reason that no massive black-white unity on a national scale exists today is that the white supremacy ruling class has poisoned the minds of white workers. Most white workers identify with their white imperialist rulers. White liberals insist on paternalism. Even bourgeois minded so-called socialists are more and more identifying and grouping on a racial basis rather than on a class basis. We Afro-American revolutionaries have discovered that some so-called socialists, we thought to be our comrades and class brothers have joined the international Ku Klux Klan fraternity for white supremacy and world domination. To our consternation, we have discovered that the bourgeois orientated power structure of some socialist states, even one with a black and white population, would prefer to preserve the white reactionary anti-communist power structure in racist America, their natural national enemy, than to see a just, democratic, fraternal socialist state brought about by the revolutionary action of oppressed blacks that would serve the best interests of all peoples and races. Like their Yankee counterparts that they love to ape so well, even to the point of emulating their racism, they are moving might and main to frustrate and defeat the revolutionary movements of the oppressed peoples throughout the world.

We of the Afro-American liberation movement resolutely condemn and oppose all counterrevolutionaries and purveyors of white supremacy whether they cloak their treachery in the garb of Marxist-Leninist phraseology or the hideous bed sheets of the Ku Klux Klan and its phoney Christian doctrine.

We who are engaged in the struggle for liberation and survival vehemently condemn the use of black dehumanized troops as cannon fodder in a white man's war of imperialism in Vietnam. We oppose Johnson's vicious crusade to dehumanize, emasculate, and enslave the great Vietnamese people.

Black boys—from the slum housing of black ghettos, ill-educated in segregated schools, emas-

culated and dehumanized by police brutality and a savage white power structure—yes, black, boys who cannot find employment, black boys who are victims of white racists who hate them because of the color of their skin—black boys whose mothers, sisters, and loved ones are being savagely clubbed, gassed, raped, maimed, lynched, and railroaded to prison in racist kangaroo courts simply for begging and praying for elementary justice are forced to share foxholes and shed their blood alongside racist Negro haters in Vietnam, who like in racist America refuse to fraternize with them in places of amusement in Tokyo and Saigon. Even out of proportion to the self-styled master race, vast numbers of black soldiers are forced to suffer and die in that vain effort to prolong and extend the brutal racist white man's imperialism. They are forced to suffer and die in the cause of a racist power structure that is as much the enemy of black people in America as it is the people of peace and freedom loving Vietnam.

And why do we call the massive Ku Klux Klan type action in Vietnam a racist white man's war of imperialism while many black men are fighting there? It is because in racist America no black man is part of Johnson's policy-making clique. The United State is governed by white power. The Pentagon is a white-dominated repressive arm of a ruthless elite white power structure. Wall Street is an exclusive club of the great white chiefs of business and industry. Black Americans are resisting the racist and imperialist lily-white power structure. How can a people who are fighting and dying simply to wrest the most basic of human rights from an intransigent and tyrannical power structure be said to be partners of that power structure and willing participants in its racist and imperialist ventures and crimes against humanity?

The United States today is a fascist society more brutal than any the world has ever known. It has all but exterminated a whole people. It has robbed and raped an entire continent with impunity. It has divided the peoples of the world into national factions and set them against themselves and their brothers. With no more authority than the wave of its bloody imperialist hand it has abrogated the right of self-determination of small nations. It has appointed and crowned itself both king and armoured knight of the whole universe. It threatens the globe with annihilation. It is a super colonial power that is colonializing the colonials.

The world famed and brilliant philosopher, Lord Bertrand Russell has justifiably stated that racist America has exterminated more black people than Hitler exterminated Jews in Nazi Germany. Lord Russell and many other fair-minded humanists throughout the world have justifiably stated that the U.S. military aggression in Vietnam is executed in a more cruel and barbarous manner than even the horrible campaigns of aggression, genocide, and conquest carried out by Hitler's fascist Germany.

Yet, there is a mighty tendency, promoted by the sinister American devil himself, to engender more sympathy and fraternalism for the so-called "good reasonable Americans" than for the wretched victims of vicious and brutal U.S. imperialism. The U.S. constitutes one of the greatest fascist threats ever to cast its ugly shadow across the face of the earth. When the butchers of Nazi Germany were on the plunder, the world cry was "Crush Nazism!" "Crush the Fascist Power Structure!" "Crush Germany!" Total war was unleashed without deference to any who may be considered "good Germans" inside Nazi Germany. No sane person opposed to fascism pleaded for a soft policy toward Nazi Germany or pleaded for victims to wait for deliverance through the benevolence of "good German workers and liberals." Racist America didn't give a damn about sparing the good Japanese people when they dropped their horrible and devastating atom bombs.

What is the motive of those who plead for the exemption of liberal Americans, whose feigned liberalism merely serves as a cloak and shield around the naked power of savage and racist U.S. imperialism? The time is fast approaching when the so-called good reasonable American must

make a decision either to overtly side with American chauvinism and jingoism or to take a resolute anti-imperialist and anti-racist stand that will be a firm basis for a just and lasting world peace.

We who are brutally oppressed and victimized cannot forever afford to spare the fortress of social reaction and tyranny because there are allegedly silent dissenters within its gates. Those who are without righteous cause of the oppressed must be prepared to suffer the consequences of the gathering storm of the violent and turbulent winds of retribution. A good man who is silent and inactive in times of great injustice and oppression is no good man at all. He is no ally to freedom and justice but is a silent partner to tyranny and condemnation. He does not deserve exemption from the condemnation and the vengeance of those whom his silence allows to be victimized. The myth of the good reasonable American who is yet to be heard is a ruse perpetrated by the psychological arm of the imperialist forces of tyranny. It is one minute to zero in racist America. Four hundred bloody and gruesome years have passed. For 400 years, our good silent partners have remained silent and inactive. Time is running out and they stand at the dividing line still beseeching patience, still beseeching the slave to leave his fate to his silent friends ever infected with inertia. They plead for deference on behalf of the good people who yet stand at one camp. We call to them to separate themselves from the devil's legions. We inform them that they have not 400 more years to make a decision but one minute before the hour of zero, before the Armageddon between the slavemaster and the slave.

Once again, in closing, let me thank our great leader and teacher, the architect of people's warfare, Chairman Mao Tse-tung, for his great and inspiring statement in support of our struggle. And to our great Chinese brothers and true revolutionaries throughout the world, we revolutionary Afro-Americans vow that we shall take the torch of freedom and justice into the streets of racist America and we shall set the last great stronghold of Yankee imperialism ablaze with our battle cry of Black Power! FREEDOM! FREEDOM! FREEDOM! NOW OR DEATH! For our people, for our country, and for our compatriots throughout the world, we shall reclaim the nobility of the American Revolution. We shall raise our flag in honor, true peace, and brotherhood to all the world! [...]

8.5 Martin Luther King, Jr., Beyond Vietnam (1967)

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I need not pause to say how very delighted I am to be here tonight, and how very delighted I am to see you expressing your concern about the issues that will be discussed tonight by turning out in such large numbers. I also want to say that I consider it a great honor to share this program with Dr. Bennett, Dr. Commager, and Rabbi Heschel, some of the most distinguished leaders and personalities of our nation. And of course it's always good to come back to Riverside Church. Over the last eight years, I have had the privilege of preaching here almost every year in that period, and it's always a rich and rewarding experience to come to this great church and this great pulpit.

I come to this great magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization that brought us together, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. The recent statements of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart, and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task

of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement, and pray that our inner being may be sensitive to its guidance. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns, this query has often loomed large and loud: "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent?" "Peace and civil rights don't mix," they say. "Aren't you hurting the cause of your people?" they ask. And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment, or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live. In the light of such tragic misunderstanding, I deem it of signal importance to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church—the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorate—leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia. Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they must play in the successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reasons to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides. Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, but rather to my fellow Americans.

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything on a society gone mad on war. And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps a more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years, especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked, and rightly so, "What about Vietnam?" They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957, when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard from Harlem, who had written earlier:

O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Now it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read "Vietnam." It can never be saved so long as it destroys the hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that "America will be" are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1964. And I cannot forget that the Nobel Peace Prize was also a commission, a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for the brotherhood of man. This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances.

But even if it were not present, I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me, the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the Good News was meant for all men—for communist and

capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the Vietcong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to explain for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place, I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood. Because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned, especially for His suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them. This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls "enemy," for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of the Liberation Front, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1954—in 1945 rather—after a combined French and Japanese occupation and before the communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony. Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not ready for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination and a government that had been established not by China—for whom the Vietnamese have no great love—but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam. Before the end of the war we were meeting eighty percent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed and Diem ruthlessly rooted out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords, and refused even to discuss reunification with the North. The peasants watched as all of this was presided over by United States influence and then by increasing numbers of United States troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown

they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received the regular promises of peace and democracy and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.

So they go, primarily women and children and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.

Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call "fortified hamlets." The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these. Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These, too, are our brothers.

Perhaps a more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation front, that strangely anonymous group we call "VC" or "communists"? What must they think of the United States of America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem, which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there was nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings, even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than twenty-five percent communist, and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking

when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam, and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will not have a part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them, the only real party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again, and then shore it up upon the power of a new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western worlds, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led this nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French Commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which could have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a unified Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again. When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be considered.

Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreement concerning foreign troops. They remind us that they did not begin to send troops in large numbers and even supplies into the South until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the north. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than eight hundred, or rather, eight thousand miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy," I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.

Surely this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are

being destroy, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor in America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and dealt death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

Each day the war goes on the hatred increased in the hearts of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism. Unquote.

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.

I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

Number one: End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.

Number two: Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

Three: Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.

Four: Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and any future Vietnam government.

Five: Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement. [sustained applause]

Part of our ongoing [applause continues], part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country if necessary. Meanwhile [applause], meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative method of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service, we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. [sustained applause] I am pleased to say that this is a path now chosen by more than seventy students at my own alma

mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. [applause] Moreover, I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. [applause] These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

Now there is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing.

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality [applause], and if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing “clergy and laymen concerned” committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. [sustained applause] So such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which has now justified the presence of U.S. military advisors in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Cambodia and why American napalm and Green Beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru.

It is with such activity that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” [applause] Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on to the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin [applause], we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see than an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. [applause]

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, “This is not just.” It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, “This is not just.” The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not

just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. [sustained applause]

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. [applause] War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and, through their misguided passions, urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not engage in a negative anticommunism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy [applause], realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. We in the West must support these revolutions.

It is a sad fact that because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch antirevolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has a revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low [Audience:] (Yes); the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I'm not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the

great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another (Yes), for love is God. (Yes) And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love... If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day.

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word." Unquote.

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood—it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message—of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history. [...]

Week 9

Frantz Fanon

Frantz Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique. He served in the Free French forces during World War II fighting against the Vichy regime. Afterwards, he became a psychiatrist in France before joining in the Algerian National Liberation Front's (FLN) struggle for independence from France.

His *Wretched of the Earth* was very influential in Black Power circles. The most (in)famous chapter, the first, makes the case for the revolutionary violence of a colonized people as a means of realizing their freedom. Less influential was the present chapter, in which he identifies the limits of a Third World nationalist approach.

9.1 Frantz Fanon, The Pitfalls of National Consciousness (1961)

History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. For a very long time the native devotes his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression of mankind will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood. It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps.

National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. We shall see that such retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action.

This traditional weakness, which is almost congenital to the national consciousness of under-developed countries, is not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime. It is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mould that its mind is set in.

The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an under-developed middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its willful narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country. The university and merchant classes which make up the most enlightened section of the new state are in fact characterized by the smallness of their number and their being concentrated in the capital, and the type of activities in which they are engaged: business, agriculture and the liberal professions. Neither financiers nor industrial magnates are to be found within this national middle class. The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. The psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry; and it is only too true that the greed of the settlers and the system of embargoes set up by colonialism has hardly left them any other choice.

Under the colonial system, a middle class which accumulates capital is an impossible phenomenon. Now, precisely, it would seem that the historical vocation of an authentic national middle class in an under-developed country is to repudiate its own nature in so far as it is bourgeois, that is to say in so far as it is the tool of capitalism, and to make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people.

In an under-developed country an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways—shocking because anti-national—of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois.

The objective of nationalist parties as from a certain given period is, we have seen, strictly national. They mobilize the people with slogans of independence, and for the rest leave it to future events. When such parties are questioned on the economic programme of the state that they are clamouring for, or on the nature of the regime which they propose to install, they are incapable of replying, because, precisely, they are completely ignorant of the economy of their own country.

This economy has always developed outside the limits of their knowledge. They have nothing more than an approximate, bookish acquaintance with the actual and potential resources of their country's soil and mineral deposits; and therefore they can only speak of these resources on a general and abstract plane. After independence this under-developed middle class, reduced in numbers and without capital, which refuses to follow the path of revolution, will fall into deplorable stagnation. It is unable to give free rein to its genius, which formerly it was wont to lament, though rather too glibly, was held in check by colonial domination. The precariousness of its resources and the paucity of its managerial class forces it back for years into an artisan economy. From its point of view, which is inevitably a very limited one, a national economy is an economy based on what may be called

local products. Long speeches will be made about the artisan class. Since the middle classes find it impossible to set up factories that would be more profit-earning both for themselves and for the country as a whole, they will surround the artisan class with a chauvinistic tenderness in keeping with the new awareness of national dignity, and which moreover will bring them in quite a lot of money. This cult of local products and this incapability to seek out new systems of management will be equally manifested by the bogging down of the national middle class in the methods of agricultural production which were characteristic of the colonial period.

The national economy of the period of independence is not set on a new footing. It is still concerned with the ground-nut harvest, with the cocoa crop and the olive yield. In the same way there is no change in the marketing of basic products, and not a single industry is set up in the country. We go on sending out raw materials; we go on being Europe's small farmers who specialize in unfinished products.

Yet the national middle class constantly demands the nationalization of the economy and of the trading sectors. This is because, from their point of view, nationalization does not mean placing the whole economy at the service of the nation and deciding to satisfy the needs of the nation. For them, nationalization does not mean governing the state with regard to the new social relations whose growth it has been decided to encourage. To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period.

Since the middle class has neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources (by intellectual resources we mean engineers and technicians) it limits its claims to the taking over of business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers. The national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial travellers, general agents and transport agents. It considers that the dignity of the country and its own welfare require that it should occupy all these posts. From now on it will insist that all the big foreign companies should pass through its hands, whether these companies wish to keep on their connexions with the country, or to open it up. The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary.

Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neocolonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. But this same lucrative role, this cheap-jack's function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national middle class to fulfil its historic role of bourgeoisie. Here, the dynamic, pioneer aspect, the characteristics of the inventor and of the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies are lamentably absent. In the colonial countries, the spirit of indulgence is dominant at the core of the bourgeoisie; and this is because the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons. It follows the Western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention, stages which are an acquisition of that Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances. In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth.

The national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way towards decadence by the Western bourgeoisies, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big-game hunting and for casinos. The

national bourgeoisie organizes centres of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry. If proof is needed of the eventual transformation of certain elements of the ex-native bourgeoisie into the organizers of parties for their Western opposite numbers, it is worthwhile having a look at what has happened in Latin America. The casinos of Havana and of Mexico, the beaches of Rio, the little Brazilian and Mexican girls, the half-breed thirteen-year-olds, the ports of Acapulco and Copacabana—all these are the stigma of this depravation of the national middle class. Because it is bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation, the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe.

Once again we must keep before us the unfortunate example of certain Latin American republics. The banking magnates, the technocrats and the big businessmen of the United States have only to step on to a plane and they are wafted into sub-tropical climes, there for a space of a week or ten days to luxuriate in the delicious depravities which their 'reserves' hold for them.

The behaviour of the national landed proprietors is practically identical with that of the middle classes of the towns. The big farmers have, as soon as independence was proclaimed, demanded the nationalization of agricultural production. Through manifold scheming practices they manage to make a clean sweep of the farms formerly owned by settlers, thus reinforcing their hold on the district. But they do not try to introduce new agricultural methods, nor to farm more intensively, nor to integrate their farming systems into a genuinely national economy.

In fact, the landed proprietors will insist that the state should give them a hundred times more facilities and privileges than were enjoyed by the foreign settlers in former times. The exploitation of agricultural workers will be intensified and made legitimate. Using two or three slogans, these new colonists will demand an enormous amount of work from the agricultural labourers, in the name of the national effort of course. There will be no modernization of agriculture, no planning for development, and no initiative; for initiative throws these people into a panic since it implies a minimum of risk, and completely upsets the hesitant, prudent, landed bourgeoisie, which gradually slips more and more into the lines laid down by colonialism. In the districts where this is the case, the only efforts made to better things are due to the government; it orders them, encourages them and finances them. The landed bourgeoisie refuses to take the slightest risk, and remains opposed to any venture and to any hazard. It has no intention of building upon sand; it demands solid investments and quick returns. The enormous profits which it pockets, enormous if we take into account the national revenue, are never reinvested. The money-in-the-stock mentality is dominant in the psychology of these landed proprietors. Sometimes, especially in the years immediately following independence, the bourgeoisie does not hesitate to invest in foreign banks the profits that it makes out of its native soil.

On the other hand large sums are spent on display: on cars, country houses, and on all those things which have been justly described by economists as characterizing an under-developed bourgeoisie.

We have said that the native bourgeoisie which comes to power uses its class aggressiveness to corner the positions formerly kept for foreigners. On the morrow of independence, in fact, it violently attacks colonial personalities: barristers, traders, landed proprietors, doctors and higher civil servants. It will fight to the bitter end against these people 'who insult our dignity as a nation.' It waves aloft the notion of the nationalization and Africanization of the ruling classes. The fact is

that such action will become more and more tinged by racism, until the bourgeoisie bluntly puts the problem to the government by saying 'We must have these posts.' They will not stop their snarling until they have taken over every one.

The working class of the towns, the masses of unemployed, the small artisans and craftsmen for their part line up behind this nationalist attitude; but in all justice let it be said, they only follow in the steps of their bourgeoisie. If the national bourgeoisie goes into competition with the Europeans, the artisans and craftsmen start a fight against non-national Africans. In the Ivory Coast, the anti-Dahoman and anti-Voltaic troubles are in fact racial riots. The Dahoman and Voltaic peoples, who control the greater part of the petty trade, are, once independence is declared, the object of hostile manifestations on the part of the people of the Ivory Coast. From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism. These foreigners are called on to leave; their shops are burned, their street stalls are wrecked, and in fact the government of the Ivory Coast commands them to go, thus giving their nationals satisfaction. In Senegal it is the anti-Sudanese demonstrations which called forth these words from Mr Mamadou Dia:

The truth is that the Senegalese people have only adopted the Mali mystique through attachment to its leaders. Their adhesion to the Mali has no other significance than that of a fresh act of faith in the political policy of the latter. The Senegalese territory was no less real, in fact it was all the more so in that the presence of the Sudanese in Dakar too obviously manifested for it to be forgotten. It is this fact which explains that, far from being regretted, the break-up of the Federation has been greeted with relief by the mass of the people and nowhere was a hand raised to maintain it. (Mamadou Dia: *Nations africaines et sohdarite mondial*, Presses Universitaires de France, p. 140.)

While certain sections of the Senegalese people jump at the chance which is afforded them by their own leaders to get rid of the Sudanese, who hamper them in commercial matters or in administrative posts, the Congolese, who stood by hardly daring to believe in the mass exodus of the Belgians, decide to bring pressure to bear on the Senegalese who have settled in Leopoldville and Elizabethville and to get them to leave.

As we see it, the mechanism is identical in the two sets of circumstances. If the Europeans get in the way of the intellectuals and business bourgeoisie of the young nation, for the mass of the people in the towns competition is represented principally by Africans of another nation. On the Ivory Coast these competitors are the Dahomans; in Ghana they are the Nigerians; in Senegal, they are the Sudanese.

When the bourgeoisie's demands for a ruling class made up exclusively of Negroes or Arabs do not spring from an authentic movement of nationalization but merely correspond to an anxiety to place in the bourgeoisie's hands the power held hitherto by the foreigner, the masses on their level present the same demands, confining, however, the notion of Negro or Arab within certain territorial limits. Between resounding assertions of the unity of the continent and this behaviour of the masses which has its inspiration in their leaders, many different attitudes may be traced. We observe a permanent see-saw between African unity, which fades quicker and quicker into the mists of oblivion, and a heart-breaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form.

On the Senegalese side, the leaders who have been the main theoreticians of African unity, and who several times over have sacrificed their local political organizations and their personal positions to this idea, are, though in all good faith, undeniably responsible. Their mistake—our mistake—has been, under pretext of fighting 'Balkanization,' not

to have taken into consideration the pre-colonial fact of territorialism. Our mistake has been not to have paid enough attention in our analyses to this phenomenon, which is the fruit of colonialism if you like, but also a sociological fact which no theory of unity, be it ever so laudable or attractive, can abolish. We have allowed ourselves to be seduced by a mirage; that of the structure which is the most pleasing to our minds; and, mistaking our ideal for reality, we have believed it enough to condemn territorialism, and its natural sequel, micro-nationalism, for us to get the better of them, and to assure the success of our chimerical undertaking. (Mamadou Dia, *op. cit.*)

From the chauvinism of the Senegalese to the tribalism of the Yolofo is not a big step. For, in fact, everywhere that the national bourgeoisie has failed to break through to the people as a whole, to enlighten them, and to consider all problems in the first place with regard to them—a failure due to the bourgeoisie's attitude of mistrust and to the haziness of its political tenets—everywhere where that national bourgeoisie has shown itself incapable of extending its vision of the world sufficiently, we observe a falling back towards old tribal attitudes, and, furious and sick at heart, we perceive that race feeling in its most exacerbated form is triumphing. Since the sole motto of the bourgeoisie is 'Replace the foreigner,' and because it hastens in every walk of life to secure justice for itself and to take over the posts that the foreigner has vacated, the 'small people' of the nation—taxi-drivers, cake-sellers and shoeblacks—will be equally quick to insist that the Dahomans go home to their own country, or will even go further and demand that the Foulbis and the Peuhls return to their jungle or their mountains.

It is from this view-point that we must interpret the fact that in young, independent countries, here and there federalism triumphs. We know that colonial domination has marked certain regions out for privilege. The colony's economy is not integrated into that of the nation as a whole. It is still organized in order to complete the economy of the different mother countries. Colonialism hardly ever exploits the whole of a country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of under-development and poverty, or at all events sinks into it more deeply.

Immediately after independence, the nationals who live in the more prosperous regions realize their good luck, and show a primary and profound reaction in refusing to feed the other nationals. The districts which are rich in ground-nuts, in cocoa and in diamonds come to the forefront, and dominate the empty panorama which the rest of the nation presents. The nationals of these rich regions look upon the others with hatred, and find in them envy and covetousness, and homicidal impulses. Old rivalries which were there before colonialism, old inter-racial hatred come to the surface. The Balubas refuse to feed the Luluas; Katanga forms itself into a state, and Albert Kalondji gets himself crowned king of South Kasai.

African unity, that vague formula, yet one to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached, and whose operative value served to bring immense pressure to bear on colonialism, African unity takes off the mask, and crumbles into regionalism inside the hollow shell of nationality itself. The national bourgeoisie, since it is strung up to defend its immediate interests, and sees no farther than the end of its nose, reveals itself incapable of simply bringing national unity into being, or of building up the nation on a stable and productive basis. The national front which has forced colonialism to withdraw cracks up, and wastes the victory it has gained.

This merciless fight engaged upon by races and tribes, and this aggressive anxiety to occupy the posts left vacant by the departure of the foreigner, will equally give rise to religious rivalries. In the country districts and the bush, minor con-fraternities, local religions and maraboutic cults

will show a new vitality and will once more take up their round of excommunications. In the big towns, on the level of the administrative classes, we will observe the coming to grips of the two great revealed religions, Islam and Catholicism.

Colonialism, which had been shaken to its very foundations by the birth of African unity, recovers its balance and tries now to break that will to unity by using all the movement's weaknesses. Colonialism will set the African peoples moving by revealing to them the existence of 'spiritual' rivalries. In Senegal, it is the newspaper *New Africa* which week by week distils hatred of Islam and of the Arabs. The Lebanese, in whose hands is the greater part of the small trading enterprises on the western seaboard, are marked out for national obloquy. The missionaries find it opportune to remind the masses that long before the advent of European colonialism the great African empires were disrupted by the Arab invasion. There is no hesitation in saying that it was the Arab occupation which paved the way for European colonialism; Arab imperialism is commonly spoken of, and the cultural imperialism of Islam is condemned. Moslems are usually kept out of the more important posts. In other regions the reverse is the case, and it is the native Christians who are considered as conscious, objective enemies of national independence.

Colonialism pulls every string shamelessly, and is only too content to set at loggerheads those Africans who only yesterday were leagued against the settlers. The idea of a Saint Bartholomew takes shape in certain minds, and the advocates of colonialism laugh to themselves derisively when they hear magnificent declarations about African unity. Inside a single nation, religion splits up the people into different spiritual communities, all of them kept up and stiffened by colonialism and its instruments. Totally unexpected events break out here and there. In regions where Catholicism or Protestantism predominates, we see the Moslem minorities flinging themselves with unaccustomed ardour into their devotions. The Islamic feast days are revived, and the Moslem religion defends itself inch by inch against the violent absolutism of the Catholic faith. Ministers of state are heard to say for the benefit of certain individuals that if they are not content they have only to go to Cairo. Sometimes American Protestantism transplants its anti-Catholic prejudices into African soil, and keeps up tribal rivalries through religion.

Taking the continent as a whole, this religious tension may be responsible for the revival of the commonest racial feeling. Africa is divided into Black and White, and the names that are substituted—Africa south of the Sahara, Africa north of the Sahara—do not manage to hide this latent racism. Here, it is affirmed that White Africa has a thousand-year-old tradition of culture; that she is Mediterranean, that she is a Continuation of Europe and that she shares in Graeco-Latin civilization. Black Africa is looked on as a region that is inert, brutal, uncivilized—in a word, savage. There, all day long you may hear unpleasant remarks about veiled women, polygamy and the supposed disdain the Arabs have for the feminine sex. All such remarks are reminiscent in their aggressiveness of those that are so often heard coming from the settler's lips. The national bourgeoisie of each of these two great religions, which has totally assimilated colonialist thought in its most corrupt form, takes over from the Europeans and establishes in the continent a racial philosophy which is extremely harmful for the future of Africa. By its laziness and will to imitation, it promotes the ingrafting and stiffening of racism which was characteristic of the colonial era. Thus it is by no means astonishing to hear in a country that calls itself African remarks which are neither more nor less than racist, and to observe the existence of paternalist behaviour which gives you the bitter impression that you are in Paris, Brussels or London.

In certain regions of Africa, drivelling paternalism with regard to the blacks and the loathsome idea derived from Western culture that the black man is impervious to logic and the sciences reign in all their nakedness. Sometimes it may be ascertained that the black minorities are hemmed in by

a kind of semi-slavery which renders legitimate that species of wariness, or in other words mistrust, which the countries of Black Africa feel with regard to the countries of White Africa. It is all too common that a citizen of Black Africa hears himself called a 'Negro' by the children when walking in the streets of a big town in White Africa, or finds that civil servants address him in pidgin English.

Yes, unfortunately it is not unknown that students from Black Africa who attend secondary schools north of the Sahara hear their schoolfellows asking if in their country there are houses, if they know what electricity is, or if they practise cannibalism in their families. Yes, unfortunately it is not unknown that in certain regions north of the Sahara Africans coming from countries south of the Sahara meet nationals who implore them to take them 'anywhere at all on condition we meet Negroes.' In parallel fashion, in certain young states of Black Africa members of parliament, or even ministers, maintain without a trace of humour that the danger is not at all of a reoccupation of their country by colonialism but of an eventual invasion by 'those vandals of Arabs coming from the North.'

As we see it, the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie is not apparent in the economic field only. They have come to power in the name of a narrow nationalism and representing a race; they will prove themselves incapable of triumphantly putting into practice a programme with even a minimum humanist content, in spite of fine-sounding declarations which are devoid of meaning since the speakers bandy about in irresponsible fashion phrases that come straight out of European treatises on morals and political philosophy. When the bourgeoisie is strong, when it can arrange everything and everybody to serve its power, it does not hesitate to affirm positively certain democratic ideas which claim to be universally applicable. There must be very exceptional circumstances if such a bourgeoisie, solidly based economically, is forced into denying its own humanist ideology. The Western bourgeoisie, though fundamentally racist, most often manages to mask this racism by a multiplicity of nuances which allow it to preserve intact its proclamation of mankind's outstanding dignity.

The Western bourgeoisie has prepared enough fences and railings to have no real fear of the competition of those whom it exploits and holds in contempt. Western bourgeois racial prejudice as regards the nigger and the Arab is a racism of contempt; it is a racism which minimizes what it hates. Bourgeois ideology, however, which is the proclamation of an essential equality between men, manages to appear logical in its own eyes by inviting the sub-men to become human, and to take as their prototype Western humanity as incarnated in the Western bourgeoisie.

The racial prejudice of the young national bourgeoisie is a racism of defence, based on fear. Essentially it is no different from vulgar tribalism, or the rivalries between septs or confraternities. We may understand why keen-wined international observers have hardly taken seriously the great flights of oratory about African unity, for it is true that there are so many cracks in that unity visible to the naked eye that it is only reasonable to insist that all these contradictions ought to be resolved before the day of unity can come.

The people of Africa have only recently come to know themselves. They have decided, in the name of the whole continent, to weigh in strongly against the colonial regime. Now the nationalist bourgeoisies, who in region after region hasten to make their own fortunes and to set up a national system of exploitation, do their utmost to put obstacles in the path of this 'Utopia.' The national bourgeoisies, who are quite clear as to what their objectives are, have decided to bar the way to that unity, to that coordinated effort on the part of two hundred and fifty million men to triumph over stupidity, hunger and inhumanity at one and the same time. This is why we must understand that African unity can only be achieved through the upward thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie.

As regards internal affairs and in the sphere of institutions, the national bourgeoisie will give equal proof of its incapacity. In a certain number of under-developed countries the parliamentary game is faked from the beginning. Powerless economically, unable to bring about the existence of coherent social relations, and standing on the principle of its domination as a class, the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest, that of the single party. It does not yet have the quiet conscience and the calm that economic power and the control of the state machine alone can give. It does not create a state that reassures the ordinary citizen, but rather one that rouses his anxiety.

The state, which by its strength and discretion ought to inspire confidence and disarm and lull everybody to sleep, on the contrary seeks to impose itself in spectacular fashion. It makes a display, it jostles people and bullies them, thus intimating to the citizen that he is in continual danger. The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical.

It is true that such a dictatorship does not go very far. It cannot halt the processes of its own contradictions. Since the bourgeoisie has not the economic means to ensure its domination and to throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country; since, moreover, it is preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible but also as prosaically as possible, the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation. And in order to hide this stagnation and to mask this regression, to reassure itself and to give itself something to boast about, the bourgeoisie can find nothing better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses.

The national bourgeoisie turns its back more and more on the interior and on the real facts of its undeveloped country, and tends to look towards the former mother country and the foreign capitalists who count on its obliging compliance. As it does not share its profits with the people and in no way allows them to enjoy any of the dues that are paid to it by the big foreign companies, it will discover the need for a popular leader to whom will fall the dual role of stabilizing the regime and of perpetuating the domination of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois dictatorship of under-developed countries draws its strength from the existence of a leader. We know that in the well-developed countries the bourgeois dictatorship is the result of the economic power of the bourgeoisie. In the under-developed countries on the contrary the leader stands for moral power, in whose shelter the thin and poverty-stricken bourgeoisie of the young nation decides to get rich.

The people who for years on end have seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power, spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie.

In spite of his frequently honest conduct and his sincere declarations, the leader as seen objectively is the fierce defender of these interests, today combined, of the national bourgeoisie and the ex-colonial companies. His honesty, which is his soul's true bent, crumbles away little by little. His contact with the masses is so unreal that he comes to believe that his authority is hated and that the services that he has rendered his country are being called in question. The leader judges the ingratitude of the masses harshly, and every day that passes ranges himself a little more resolutely on the side of the exploiters. He therefore knowingly becomes the aider and abettor of the young bourgeoisie which is plunging into the mire of corruption and pleasure.

The economic channels of the young state sink back inevitably into neo-colonialist lines. The national economy, formerly protected, is today literally controlled. The budget is balanced through loans and gifts, while every three or four months the chief ministers themselves or else their governmental delegations come to the erstwhile mother countries or elsewhere, fishing for capital.

The former colonial power increases its demands, accumulates concessions and guarantees and takes fewer and fewer pains to mask the hold it has over the national government. The people stagnate deplorably in unbearable poverty; slowly they awaken to the unutterable treason of their leaders. This awakening is all the more acute in that the bourgeoisie is incapable of learning its lesson. The distribution of wealth that it effects is not spread out between a great many sectors; it is not ranged among different levels, nor does it set up a hierarchy of half-tones. The new caste is an affront all the more disgusting in that the immense majority, nine-tenths of the population, continue to die of starvation. The scandalous enrichment, speedy and pitiless, of this caste is accompanied by a decisive awakening on the part of the people, and a growing awareness that promises stormy days to come. The bourgeois caste, that section of the nation which annexes for its own profit all the wealth of the country, by a kind of unexpected logic will pass disparaging judgements upon the other Negroes and the other Arabs that more often than not are reminiscent of the racist doctrines of the former representatives of the colonial power. At one and the same time the poverty of the people, the immoderate money-making of the bourgeois caste, and its widespread scorn for the rest of the nation will harden thought and action.

But such threats will lead to the re-affirmation of authority and the appearance of dictatorship. The leader, who has behind him a lifetime of political action and devoted patriotism, constitutes a screen between the people and the rapacious bourgeoisie since he stands surety for the ventures of that caste and closes his eyes to their insolence, their mediocrity and their fundamental immorality. He acts as a braking-power on the awakening consciousness of the people. He comes to the aid of the bourgeois caste and hides his manoeuvres from the people, thus becoming the most eager worker in the task of mystifying and bewildering the masses. Every time he speaks to the people he calls to mind his often heroic life, the struggles he has led in the name of the people and the victories in their name he has achieved, thereby intimating clearly to the masses that they ought to go on putting their confidence in him. There are plenty of examples of African patriots who have introduced into the cautious political advance of their elders a decisive style characterized by its nationalist outlook. These men came from the backwoods, and they proclaimed, to the scandal of the dominating power and the shame of the nationals of the capital, that they came from the backwoods and that they spoke in the name of the Negroes. These men, who have sung the praises of their race, who have taken upon themselves the whole burden of the past, complete with cannibalism and degeneracy, find themselves today, alas, at the head of a team of administrators who turn their back on the jungle and who proclaim that the vocation of their people is to obey, to go on obeying and to be obedient till the end of time.

The leader pacifies the people. For years on end after independence has been won, we see him, incapable of urging on the people to a concrete task, unable really to open the future to them or of flinging them into the path of national reconstruction, that is to say, of their own reconstruction; we see him reassessing the history of independence and recalling the sacred unity of the struggle for liberation. The leader, because he refuses to break up the national bourgeoisie, asks the people to fall back into the past and to become drunk on the remembrance of the epoch which led up to independence. The leader, seen objectively, brings the people to a halt and persists in either expelling them from history or preventing them from taking root in it. During the struggle for liberation the leader awakened the people and promised them a forward march, heroic and unmitigated. Today,

he uses every means to put them to sleep, and three or four times a year asks them to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then.

Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives. The bourgeoisie who are in power vainly increase the number of processions; the masses have no illusions. They are hungry; and the police officers, though now they are Africans, do not serve to reassure them particularly. The masses begin to sulk; they turn away from this nation in which they have been given no place and begin to lose interest in it.

From time to time, however, the leader makes an effort; he speaks on the radio or makes a tour of the country to pacify the people, to calm them and bemuse them. The leader is all the more necessary in that there is no party. During the period of the struggle for independence there was one right enough, a party led by the present leader. But since then this party has sadly disintegrated; nothing is left but the shell of a party, the name, the emblem and the motto. The living party, which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated according to the real needs of the mass of the people, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interests. Since the proclamation of independence the party no longer helps the people to set out its demands, to become more aware of its needs and better able to establish its power. Today, the party's mission is to deliver to the people the instructions which issue from the summit. There no longer exists the fruitful give-and-take from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom which creates and guarantees democracy in a party. Quite on the contrary, the party has made itself into a screen between the masses and the leaders. There is no longer any party life, for the branches which were set up during the colonial period are today completely demobilized.

The militant chomps on his bit. Now it is that the attitude taken up by certain militants during the struggle for liberation is seen to be justified, for the fact is that in the thick of the fight more than a few militants asked the leaders to formulate a dogma, to set out their objectives and to draw up a programme. But under the pretext of safeguarding national unity, the leaders categorically refused to attempt such a task. The only worthwhile dogma, it was repeatedly stated, is the union of the nation against colonialism. And on they went, armed with an impetuous slogan which stood for principles, while their only ideological activity took the form of a series of variants on the theme of the right of peoples to self-determination, borne on the wind of history which would inevitably sweep away colonialism. When the militants asked whether the wind of history couldn't be a little more clearly analysed, the leaders gave them instead hope and trust, the necessity of decolonialization and its inevitability, and more to that effect.

After independence, the party sinks into an extraordinary lethargy. The militants are only called upon when so-called popular manifestations are afoot, or international conferences, or independence celebrations. The local party leaders are given administrative posts, the party becomes an administration, and the militants disappear into the crowd and take the empty title of citizen. Now that they have fulfilled their historical mission of leading the bourgeoisie to power, they are firmly invited to retire so that the bourgeoisie may carry out *its* mission in peace and quiet. But we have seen that the national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is incapable of carrying out any mission whatever. After a few years, the break-up of the party becomes obvious, and any observer, even the most superficial, can notice that the party, today the skeleton of its former self, only serves to immobilize the people. The party, which during the battle had drawn to itself the whole nation, is falling to pieces. The intellectuals who on the eve of independence rallied to the party, now make it

dear by their attitude that they gave their support with no other end in view than to secure their slices of the cake of independence. The party is becoming a means of private advancement.

There exists inside the new regime, however, an inequality in the acquisition of wealth and in monopolization. Some have a double source of income and demonstrate that they are specialized in opportunism. Privileges multiply and corruption triumphs, while morality declines. Today the vultures are too numerous and too voracious in proportion to the lean spoils of the national wealth. The party, a true instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilized. The party helps the government to hold the people down. It becomes more and more clearly anti-democratic, an implement of coercion. The party is objectively, sometimes subjectively, the accomplice of the merchant bourgeoisie. In the same way that the national bourgeoisie conjures away its phase of construction in order to throw itself into the enjoyment of its wealth, in parallel fashion in the institutional sphere it jumps the parliamentary phase and chooses a dictatorship of the national-socialist type. We know today that this fascism at high interest which has triumphed for half a century in Latin America is the dialectic result of states which were semi-colonial during the period of independence.

In these poor, under-developed countries, where the rule is that the greatest wealth is surrounded by the greatest poverty, the army and the police constitute the pillars of the regime; an army and a police force (another rule which must not be forgotten) which are advised by foreign experts. The strength of the police force and the power of the army are proportionate to the stagnation in which the rest of the nation is sunk. By dint of yearly loans, concessions are snatched up by foreigners; scandals are numerous, ministers grow rich, their wives doll themselves up, the members of parliament feather their nests and there is not a soul down to the simple policeman or the customs officer who does not join in the great procession of corruption.

The opposition becomes more aggressive and the people at once catch on to its propaganda. From now on their hostility to the bourgeoisie is plainly visible. This young bourgeoisie which appears to be afflicted with precocious senility takes no heed of the advice showered upon it, and reveals itself incapable of understanding that it would be in its interest to draw a veil, even if only the flimsiest kind, over its exploitation. It is the most Christian newspaper *The African Weekly*, published in Brazzaville, which addresses the princes of the regime thus:

You who are in good positions, you and your wives, today you enjoy many comforts; perhaps a good education, a fine house, good contacts and many missions on which you are delegated which open new horizons to you. But all your wealth forms a hard shell which prevents your seeing the poverty that surrounds you. Take care.

This warning coming from *The African Weekly* and, addressed to the henchmen of Monsieur Youlou has, we may imagine, nothing revolutionary about it. What *The African Weekly* wants to point out to the starvers of the Congolese people is that God will punish their conduct. It continues: 'If there is no room in your heart for consideration towards those who are beneath you, there will be no room for you in God's house.'

It is clear that the national bourgeoisie hardly worries at all about such an indictment. With its wave-lengths tuned in to Europe, it continues firmly and resolutely to make the most of the situation. The enormous profits which it derives from the exploitation of the people are exported to foreign countries. The young national bourgeoisie is often more suspicious of the regime that it has set up than are the foreign companies. The national bourgeoisie refuses to invest in its own country and behaves towards the state that protects and nurtures it with, it must be remarked, astonishing

ingratitude. It acquires foreign securities in the European markets, and goes off to spend the weekend in Paris or Hamburg. The behaviour of the national bourgeoisie of certain under-developed countries is reminiscent of the members of a gang, who after every hold-up hide their share in the swag from the other members who are their accomplices and prudently start thinking about their retirement. Such behaviour shows that more or less consciously the national bourgeoisie is playing to lose if the game goes on too long.

They guess that the present situation will not last indefinitely but they intend to make the most of it. Such exploitation and such contempt for the state, however, inevitably gives rise to discontent among the mass of the people. It is in these conditions that the regime becomes harsher. In the absence of a parliament it is the army that becomes the arbiter: but sooner or later it will realize its power and will hold over the government's head the threat of a manifesto.

As we see it, the national bourgeoisie of certain under-developed countries has learned nothing from books. If they had looked closer at the Latin American countries they doubtless would have recognized the dangers which threaten them. We may thus conclude that this bourgeoisie in miniature that thrusts itself into the forefront is condemned to mark time, accomplishing nothing. In under-developed countries the bourgeois phase is impossibly arid. Certainly, there is a police dictatorship and a profiteering caste, but the construction of an elaborate bourgeois society seems to be condemned to failure. The ranks of decked-out profiteers whose grasping hands scrape up the bank-notes from a poverty-stricken country will sooner or later be men of straw in the hands of the army, cleverly handled by foreign experts. In this way the former mother country practises indirect government, both by the bourgeoisie that it upholds and also by the national army led by its experts, an army that pins the people down, immobilizing and terrorizing them.

The observations that we have been able to make about the national bourgeoisie bring us to a conclusion which should cause no surprise. In under-developed countries, the bourgeoisie should not be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and its growth. In other words, the combined effort of the masses led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles ought to bar the way to this useless and harmful middle class.

The theoretical question that for the last fifty years has been raised whenever the history of under-developed countries is under discussion—whether or not the bourgeois phase can be skipped—ought to be answered in the field of revolutionary action, and not by logic. The bourgeois phase in under-developed countries can only justify itself in so far as the national bourgeoisie has sufficient economic and technical strength to build up a bourgeois society, to create the conditions necessary for the development of a large-scale proletariat, to mechanize agriculture and finally to make possible the existence of an authentic national culture.

A bourgeoisie similar to that which developed in Europe is able to elaborate an ideology and at the same time strengthen its own power. Such a bourgeoisie, dynamic, educated and secular, has fully succeeded in its undertaking of the accumulation of capital and has given to the nation a minimum of prosperity. In under-developed countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature.

The struggle against the bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is far from being a theoretical one. It is not concerned with making out its condemnation as laid down by the judgement of history. The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries must not be opposed because it threatens

to slow down the total, harmonious development of the nation. It must simply be stoutly opposed because, literally, it is good for nothing. This bourgeoisie, expressing its mediocrity in its profits, its achievements and in its thought, tries to hide this mediocrity by buildings which have prestige value at the individual level, by chromium plating on big American cars, by holidays on the Riviera and week-ends in neon-lit night-clubs.

This bourgeoisie which turns its back more and more on the people as a whole does not even succeed in extracting spectacular concessions from the West, such as investments which would be of value for the country's economy or the setting up of certain industries. On the contrary, assembly plants spring up and consecrate the type of neo-colonialist industrialization in which the country's economy flounders. Thus it must not be said that the national bourgeoisie retards the country's evolution, that it makes it lose time or that it threatens to lead the nation up blind alleys. In fact, the bourgeois phase in the history of under-developed countries is a completely useless phase. When this caste has vanished, devoured by its own contradictions, it will be seen that nothing new has happened since independence was proclaimed, and that everything must be started again from scratch. The change-over will not take place at the level of the structures set up by the bourgeoisie during its reign, since that caste has done nothing more than take over unchanged the legacy of the economy, the thought and the institutions left by the colonialists.

It is all the easier to neutralize this bourgeois class in that, as we have seen, it is numerically, intellectually and economically weak. In the colonized territories, the bourgeois caste draws its strength after independence chiefly from agreements reached with the former colonial power. The national bourgeoisie has all the more opportunity to take over from the oppressor since it has been given time for a leisurely tête-à-tête with the ex-colonial power. But deep-rooted contradictions undermine the ranks of that bourgeoisie; it is this that gives the observer an impression of instability. There is not as yet a homogeneity of caste. Many intellectuals, for example, condemn this regime based on the domination of the few. In under-developed countries, there are certain members of the elite, intellectuals and civil servants, who are sincere, who feel the necessity for a planned economy, the outlawing of profiteers and the strict prohibition of attempts at mystification. In addition, such men fight in a certain measure for the mass participation of the people in the ordering of public affairs.

In those under-developed countries which acceded to independence, there almost always exists a small number of honest intellectuals, who have no very precise ideas about politics, but who instinctively distrust the race for positions and pensions which is symptomatic of the early days of independence in colonized countries. The personal situation of these men (bread-winners of large families) or their background (hard struggles and a strictly moral upbringing) explain their manifest contempt for profiteers and schemers. We must know how to use these men in the decisive battle that we mean to engage upon which will lead to a healthier outlook for the nation. Closing the road to the national bourgeoisie is, certainly, the means whereby the vicissitudes of new-found independence may be avoided, and with them the decline of morals, the installing of corruption within the country, economic regression, and the immediate disaster of an anti-democratic regime depending on force and intimidation. But it is also the only means towards progress.

What holds up the taking of a decision by the profoundly democratic elements of the young nation and adds to their timidity is the apparent strength of the bourgeoisie. In newly independent under-developed countries, the whole of the ruling class swarms into the towns built by colonialism. The absence of any analysis of the total population induces onlookers to think that there exists a powerful and perfectly organized bourgeoisie. In fact, we know today that the bourgeoisie in under-developed countries is non-existent. What creates a bourgeoisie is not the bourgeois spirit, nor its

taste or manners, nor even its aspirations. The bourgeoisie is above all the direct product of precise economic conditions.

Now, in the colonies, the economic conditions are conditions of a foreign bourgeoisie. Through its agents, it is the bourgeoisie of the mother country that we find present in the colonial towns. The bourgeoisie in the colonies is, before independence, a Western bourgeoisie, a true branch of the bourgeoisie of the mother country, that derives its legitimacy, its force and its stability from the bourgeoisie of the homeland. During the period of unrest that precedes independence, certain native elements, intellectuals and traders, who live in the midst of that imported bourgeoisie, try to identify themselves with it. A permanent wish for identification with the bourgeois representatives of the mother country is to be found among the native intellectuals and merchants.

This native bourgeoisie, which has adopted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the ways of thinking characteristic of the mother country, which has become wonderfully detached from its own thought and has based its consciousness upon foundations which are typically foreign, will realize, with its mouth watering, that it lacks something essential to a bourgeoisie: money. The bourgeoisie of an under-developed country is a bourgeoisie in spirit only. It is not its economic strength, nor the dynamism of its leaders, nor the breadth of its ideas that ensures its peculiar quality of bourgeoisie. Consequently it remains at the beginning and for a long time afterwards a bourgeoisie of the civil service. It is the positions that it holds in the new national administration which will give it strength and serenity. If the government gives it enough time and opportunity, this bourgeoisie will manage to put away enough money to stiffen its domination. But it will always reveal itself as incapable of giving birth to an authentic bourgeois society with all the economic and industrial consequences which this entails.

From the beginning the national bourgeoisie directs its efforts towards activities of the intermediary type. The basis of its strength is found in its aptitude for trade and small business enterprises, and in securing commissions. It is not its money that works, but its business acumen. It does not go for investments and it cannot achieve that accumulation of capital necessary to the birth and blossoming of an authentic bourgeoisie. At that rate it would take centuries to set on foot an embryonic industrial revolution, and in any case it would find the way barred by the relentless opposition of the former mother country, which will have taken all precautions when setting up neo-colonialist trade conventions.

If the government wants to bring the country out of its stagnation and set it well on the road towards development and progress, it must first and foremost nationalize the middle-man's trading sector. The bourgeoisie, who wish to see both the triumph of the spirit of money-making and the enjoyment of consumer goods, and at the same time the triumph of their contemptuous attitude towards the mass of the people and the scandalous aspect of profit-making (should we not rather call it robbery?), in fact invest largely in this sector. The intermediary market which formerly was dominated by the settlers will be invaded by the young national bourgeoisie. In a colonial economy the intermediary sector is by far the most important. If you want to progress, you must decide in the first few hours to nationalize this sector. But it is clear that such a nationalization ought not to take on a rigidly state-controlled aspect. It is not a question of placing at the head of these services citizens who have had no political education. Every time such a procedure has been adopted it has been seen that the government has in fact contributed to the triumph of a dictatorship of civil servants who had been set in the mould of the former mother country, and who quickly showed themselves incapable of thinking in terms of the nation as a whole. These civil servants very soon began to sabotage the national economy and to throw its structure out of joint; under them, corruption, prevarication, the diversion of stocks and the black market came

to stay. Nationalizing the intermediary sector means organizing wholesale and retail cooperatives on a democratic basis; it also means decentralizing these cooperatives by getting the mass of the people interested in the ordering of public affairs. You will not be able to do all this unless you give the people some political education. Previously, it was realized that this key problem should be clarified once and for all. Today, it is true that the principle of the political education of the masses is generally subscribed to in under-developed countries. But it does not seem that this primordial task is really taken to heart. When people stress the need to educate the people politically, they decide to point out at the same time that they want to be supported by the people in the action that they are taking. A government which declares that it wishes to educate the people politically thus expresses its desire to govern with the people and for the people. It ought not to speak a language destined to camouflage a bourgeois administration. In the capitalist countries, the bourgeois governments have long since left this infantile stage of authority behind. To put it bluntly, they govern with the help of their laws, their economic strength and their police. Now that their power is firmly established they no longer need to lose time in striking demagogic attitudes. They govern in their own interests, and they have the courage of their own strength. They have created legitimacy, and they are strong in their own right.

The bourgeois caste in newly independent countries have not yet the cynicism nor the unruffled calm which are founded on the strength of long-established bourgeoisies. From this springs the fact that they show a certain anxiety to hide their real convictions, to side-track, and in short to set themselves up as a popular force. But the inclusion of the masses in politics does not consist in mobilizing three or four times a year ten thousand or a hundred thousand men and women. These mass meetings and spectacular gatherings are akin to the old tactics that date from before independence, whereby you exhibited your forces in order to prove to yourself and to others that you had the people behind you. The political education of the masses proposes not to treat the masses as children but to make adults of them.

This brings us to consider the role of the political party in an under-developed country. We have seen in the preceding pages that very often simple souls, who moreover belong to the newly born bourgeoisie, never stop repeating that in an under-developed country the direction of affairs by a strong authority, in other words a dictatorship, is a necessity. With this in view the party is given the task of supervising the masses. The party plays understudy to the administration and the police, and controls the masses, not in order to make sure that they really participate in the business of governing the nation, but in order to remind them constantly that the government expects from them obedience and discipline. That famous dictatorship, whose supporters believe that it is called for by the historical process and consider it an indispensable prelude to the dawn of independence, in fact symbolizes the decision of the bourgeois caste to govern the under-developed country first with the help of the people, but soon against them. The progressive transformation of the party into an information service is the indication that the government holds itself more and more on the defensive. The incoherent mass of the people is seen as a blind force that must be continually held in check either by mystification or by the fear inspired by the police force. The party acts as a barometer and as an information service. The militant is turned into an informer. He is entrusted with punitive expeditions against the villages. The embryo opposition parties are liquidated by beatings and stonings. The opposition candidates see their houses set on fire. The police increase their provocations. In these conditions, you may be sure, the party is unchallenged and 99.99 per cent of the votes are cast for the governmental candidate. We should add that in Africa a certain number of governments actually behave in this way. All the opposition parties, which moreover are usually progressive and would therefore tend to work for the greater influence of the masses in the

conduct of public matters, and who desire that the proud, money-making bourgeoisie should be brought to heel, have been by dint of baton charges and prisons condemned first to silence and then to a clandestine existence.

The political party in many parts of Africa which are today independent is puffed up in a most dangerous way. In the presence of a member of the party, the people are silent, behave like a flock of sheep and publish panegyrics in praise of the government of the leader. But in the street when evening comes, away from the village, in, the cafes or by the river, the bitter disappointment of the people, their despair but also their unceasing anger makes itself heard. The party, instead of welcoming the expression of popular discontentment, instead of taking for its fundamental purpose the free flow of ideas from the people up to the government, forms a screen, and forbids such ideas. The party leaders behave like common sergeant-majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks.' This party which used to call itself the servant of the people, which used to claim that it worked for the free expression of the people's will, as soon as the colonial power puts the country into its control hastens to send the people back to their caves. As far as national unity is concerned the party will also make many mistakes, as for example when the so-called national party behaves as a party based on ethnical differences. It becomes, in fact, the tribe which makes itself into a party. This party which of its own will proclaims that it is a national party, and which claims to speak in the name of the totality of the people, secretly, sometimes even openly organizes an authentic ethnical dictatorship. We no longer see the rise of a bourgeois dictatorship, but a tribal dictatorship. The ministers, the members of the cabinet, the ambassadors and local commissioners are chosen from the same ethnological group as the leader, sometimes directly from his own family. Such regimes of the family sort seem to go back to the old laws of inbreeding, and not anger but shame is felt when we are faced with such stupidity, such an imposture, such intellectual and spiritual poverty. These heads of the government are the true traitors in Africa, for they sell their country to the most terrifying of all its enemies: stupidity. This tribalizing of the central authority, it is certain, encourages regionalist ideas and separatism. All the decentralizing tendencies spring up again and triumph, and the nation falls to pieces, broken in bits. The leader, who once used to call for 'African unity' and who thought of his own little family wakes up one day to find himself saddled with five tribes, who also want to have their own ambassadors and ministers; and irresponsible as ever, still unaware and still despicable, he denounces their 'treason.'

We have more than once drawn attention to the baleful influence frequently wielded by the leader. This is due to the fact that the party in certain districts is organized like a gang, with the toughest person in it as its head. The ascendancy of such a leader and his power over others is often mentioned, and people have no hesitation in declaring, in a tone of slightly admiring complicity that he strikes terror into his nearest collaborators. In order to avoid these many pitfalls an unceasing battle must be waged, a battle to prevent the party ever becoming a willing tool in the hands of a leader. 'Leader': the word comes from the English verb 'to lead,' but a frequent French translation is 'to drive.' The driver, the shepherd of the people no longer exists today. The people are no longer a herd; they do not need to be driven. If the leader drives me on, I want him to realize that at the same time I show him the way; the nation ought not to be something bossed by a Grand Panjandrum. We may understand the panic caused in governmental circles each time one of these leaders falls ill; they are obsessed by the question of who is to succeed him. What will happen to the country if the leader disappears? The ruling classes who have abdicated in favour of the leader, irresponsible, oblivious of everything and essentially preoccupied with the pleasures of their everyday life, their cocktail parties, their journeys paid for by government money, the profits they can make out of various schemes—from time to time these people discover the spiritual waste land at the heart of

the nation.

A country that really wishes to answer the questions that history puts to it, that wants to develop not only its towns but also the brains of its inhabitants, such a country must possess a trustworthy political party. The party is not a tool in the hands of the government. Quite on the contrary, the party is a tool in the hands of the people; it is they who decide on the policy that the government carries out. The party is not, and ought never to be, the only political bureau where all the members of the government and the chief dignitaries of the regime may meet freely together. Only too frequently the political bureau, unfortunately, consists of all the party and its members who reside permanently in the capital. In an underdeveloped country, the leading members of the party ought to avoid the capital as if it had the plague. They ought, with some few exceptions, to live in the country districts. The centralization of all activity in the city ought to be avoided. No excuse of administrative discipline should be taken as legitimizing that excrescence of a capital which is already over-populated and over-developed with regard to nine-tenths of the country. The party should be decentralized in the extreme. It is the only way to bring life to regions which are dead, those regions which are not yet awakened to life.

In practice, there will be at least one member of the political bureau in each area and he will deliberately not be appointed as head of that area. He will have no administrative powers. The regional member of the political bureau is not expected to hold the highest rank in the regional administrative organization. He ought not automatically to belong to the regional administrative body. For the people, the party is not an authority, but an organism through which they as the people exercise their authority and express their will. The less there is of confusion and duality of powers, the more the party will play its part of guide and the more surely it will constitute for the people a decisive guarantee. If the party is mingled with the government, the fact of being a party militant means that you take the short cut to gain private ends, to hold a post in the government, step up the ladder, get promotion and make a career for yourself.

In an underdeveloped country, the setting up of dynamic district officials stops the progress whereby the towns become top-heavy, and the incoherent rush towards the cities of the mass of country people. The setting up early in the days of independence of regional organizations and officials who have full authority to do everything in their power to awaken such a region, to bring life to it and to hasten the growth of consciousness in it is a necessity from which there is no escape for a country that wishes to progress. Otherwise, the government big-wigs and the party officials group themselves around the leader. The government services swell to huge proportions, not because they are developing and specializing, but because new-found cousins and fresh militants are looking for jobs and hope to edge themselves into the government machine. And the dream of every citizen is to get up to the capital, and to have his share of the cake. The local districts are deserted; the mass of the country people with no one to lead them, uneducated and unsupported, turn their backs on their poorly-laboured fields and flock towards the outer ring of suburbs, thus swelling out of all proportion the ranks of the *lumpen-proletariat*.

The moment for a fresh national crisis is not far off. To avoid it, we think that a quite different policy should be followed: that the interior, the back-country ought to be the most privileged part of the country. Moreover, in the last resort, there is nothing inconvenient in the government choosing its seat elsewhere than in the capital. The capital must be deconsecrated; the outcast masses must be shown that we have decided to work for them. It is with this idea in mind 'that the government of Brazil tried to found Brazilia. The dead city of Rio de Janeiro was an insult to the Brazilian people. But, unfortunately, Brazilia is just another new capital, as monstrous as the first. The only advantage of this achievement is that, today, there exists a road through the bush to it.

No, there is no serious reason which can be opposed to the choice of another capital, or to the moving of the government as a whole towards one of the most under-populated regions. The capital of under-developed countries is a commercial notion inherited from the colonial period. But we who are citizens of the under-developed countries, we ought to seek every occasion for contacts with the rural masses. We must create a national policy, in other words a policy for the masses. We ought never to lose contact with the people which has battled for its independence and for the concrete betterment of its existence.

The native civil servants and technicians ought not to bury themselves in diagrams and statistics, but rather in the heart of the people. They ought not to bristle up every time there is question of a move to be made to the 'interior.' We should no longer see the young women of the country threaten their husbands with divorce if they do not manage to avoid being appointed to a rural post. For these reasons, the political bureau of the party ought to treat these forgotten districts in a very privileged manner; and the life of the capital, an altogether artificial life which is stuck on to the real, national life like a foreign body ought to take up the least space possible in the life of the nation, which is sacred and fundamental.

In an under-developed country the party ought to be organized in such fashion that it is not simply content with having contacts with the masses. The party should be the direct expression of the masses. The party is not an administration responsible for transmitting government orders; it is the energetic spokesman and the incorruptible defender of the masses. In order to arrive at this conception of the party, we must above all rid ourselves of the very Western, very bourgeois and therefore contemptuous attitude that the masses are incapable of governing themselves. In fact, experience proves that the masses understand perfectly the most complicated problems. One of the greatest services that the Algerian revolution will have rendered to the intellectuals of Algeria will be to have placed them in contact with the people, to have allowed them to see the extreme, ineffable poverty of the people, at the same time allowing them to watch the awakening of the people's intelligence and the onward progress of their consciousness. The Algerian people, that mass of starving illiterates, those men and women plunged for centuries in the most appalling obscurity have held out against tanks and aeroplanes, against napalm and 'psychological services,' but above all against corruption and brain-washing, against traitors and against the 'national' armies of General Bellounis. This people has held out in spite of hesitant or feeble individuals, and in spite of would-be dictators. This people has held out because for seven years its struggle has opened up for it vistas that it never dreamed existed. Today, arms factories are working in the midst of the mountains several yards underground; today, the people's tribunals are functioning at every level, and local planning commissions are organizing the division of large-scale holdings, and working out the Algeria of tomorrow. An isolated individual may obstinately refuse to understand a problem, but the group or the village understands with disconcerting rapidity. It is true that if care is taken to use only a language that is understood by graduates in law and economics, you can easily prove that the masses have to be managed from above. But if you speak the language of every day; if you are not obsessed by the perverse desire to spread confusion and to rid yourself of the people, then you will realize that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning and to learn all the tricks of the trade. If recourse is had to technical language, this signifies that it has been decided to consider the masses as uninitiated. Such a language is hard put to it to hide the lecturers' wish to cheat the people and to leave them out of things. The business of obscuring language is a mask behind which stands out the much greater business of plunder. The people's property and the people's sovereignty are to be stripped from them at one and the same time. Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to

understand. And if you think that you don't need them, and that on the contrary they may hinder the smooth running of the many limited liability companies whose aim it is to make the people even poorer, then the problem is quite clear.

For if you think that you can manage a country without letting the people interfere, if you think that the people upset the game by their mere presence, whether they slow it down or whether by their natural ignorance they sabotage it, then you must have no hesitation: you must keep the people out. Now, it so happens that when the people are invited to partake in the management of the country, they do not slow the movement down but on the contrary they speed it up. We Algerians have had occasion and the good fortune during the course of this war to handle a fair number of questions. In certain country districts, the politico-military leaders of the revolution found themselves in fact confronted with situations which called for radical solutions. We shall look at some of these situations.

During the years 1956–7, French colonialism had marked off certain zones as forbidden, and within these zones people's movements were strictly controlled. Thus the peasants could no longer go freely to the towns and buy provisions. During this period, the grocers made huge profits. The prices of tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco and salt soared. The black market flourished blatantly. The peasants who could not pay in money mortgaged their crops, in other words their land, or else lopped off field after field of their fathers' farms and during the second phase worked them for the grocer. As soon as the political commissioners realized the danger of the situation they reacted immediately. Thus a rational system of provisioning was instituted: the grocer who went to the town was obliged to buy from nationalist wholesalers who handed him an invoice which clearly showed the prices of the goods. When the retailer got back to the village, before doing anything else he had to go to the political commissioner who checked the invoice, decided on the margin of profit and fixed the price at which the various goods should be sold. However, the retailer soon discovered a new trick, and after three or four days declared that his stocks had run out. In fact, he went on with his business of selling on the black market on the sly. The reaction of the politico-military authorities was thorough-going. Heavy penalizations were decided on, and the fines collected were put into the village funds and used for social purposes or to pay for public works in the general interest. Sometimes it was decided to shut down the shop for a while. Then if there was a repetition of black marketeering, the business was at once confiscated and a managing committee elected to carry it on, which paid a monthly allowance to the former owner.

Taking these experiences as a starting-point, the functioning of the main laws of economics were explained to the people, with concrete examples. The accumulation of capital ceased to be a theory and became a very real and immediate mode of behaviour. The people understood how that once a man was in trade, he could become rich and increase his turnover. Then and then only did the peasants tell the tale of how the grocer gave them loans at exorbitant interest, and others recalled how he evicted them from their land and how from owners they became labourers. The more the people understand, the more watchful they become, and the more they come to realize that finally everything depends on them and their salvation lies in their own cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests and in knowing who are their enemies. The people come to understand that wealth is not the fruit of labour but the result of organized, protected robbery. Rich people are no longer respectable people; they are nothing more than flesh-eating animals, jackals and vultures which wallow in the people's blood. With another end in view the political commissioners have had to decide that nobody will work for anyone else any longer. The land belongs to those that till it. This is a principle which has through explanation become a fundamental law of the Algerian revolution. The peasants who used to employ agricultural labourers have been obliged to give a share of the

land to their former employees.

So it may be seen that production per acre trebled, in spite of the many raids by the French, in spite of bombardments from the air, and the difficulty of getting manures. The *fellahs* who at harvest-time were able to judge and weigh the crops thus obtained wanted to know whence came such a phenomenon; and they were quick to understand that the idea of work is not as simple as all that, that slavery is opposed to work, and that work presupposes liberty, responsibility and consciousness.

In those districts where we have been able to carry out successfully these interesting experiments, where we have watched man being created by revolutionary beginnings, the peasants have very clearly caught hold of the idea that the more intelligence you bring to your work, the more pleasure you will have in it. We have been able to make the masses understand that work is not simply the output of energy, nor the functioning of certain muscles, but that people work more by using their brains and their hearts than with only their muscles and their sweat. In the same way in these liberated districts which are at the same time excluded from the old trade routes we have had to modify production, which formerly looked only towards the towns and towards export. We have organized production to meet consumers' needs for the people and for the units of the national army of liberation. We have quadrupled the production of lentils and organized the manufacture of charcoal. Green vegetables and charcoal have been sent through the mountains from the north to the south, whereas the southern districts send meat to the north. This coordination was decided upon by the F.L.N. and they it was who set up the system of communications. We did not have any technicians or planners coming from big Western universities; but in these liberated regions the daily ration went up to the hitherto unheard-of figure of 3,200 calories. The people were not content with coming triumphant out of this test. They started asking themselves theoretical questions: for example, why did certain districts never see an orange before the war of liberation, while thousands of tons are exported every year abroad? Why were grapes unknown to a great many Algerians whereas the European peoples enjoyed them by the million? Today, the people have a very clear notion of what belongs to them. The Algerian people today know that they are the sole owners of the soil and mineral wealth of their country. And if some individuals do not understand the unrelenting refusal of the F.L.N. to tolerate any encroachment on this right of ownership, and its fierce refusal to allow any compromise on principles, they must one and all remember that the Algerian people is today an adult people, responsible and fully conscious of its responsibilities. In short, the Algerians are men of property.

If we have taken the example of Algeria to illustrate our subject, it is not at all with the intention of glorifying our own people, but simply to show the important part played by the war in leading them towards consciousness of themselves. It is clear that other peoples have come to the same conclusion in different ways. We know for sure today that in Algeria the test of force was inevitable; but other countries through political action and through the work of clarification undertaken by a party have led their people to the same results. In Algeria, we have realized that the masses are equal to the problems which confront them. In an under-developed country, experience proves that the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if it takes them twice or three times as long. The fact is that the time taken up by explaining, the time 'lost' in treating the worker as a human being, will be caught up in the execution of the plan. People must know where they are going, and why. The politician should not ignore the fact that the future remains a closed book so long as the consciousness of the people remains imperfect, elementary and cloudy. We African politicians must have very clear ideas on the situation of our people. But this clarity of ideas must be profoundly

dialectical. The awakening of the whole people will not come about at once; the people's work in the building of the nation will not immediately take on its full dimensions: first because the means of communication and transmission are only beginning to be developed; secondly because the yardstick of time must no longer be that of the moment or up till the next harvest, but must become that of the rest of the world, and lastly because the spirit of discouragement which has been deeply rooted in people's minds by colonial domination is still very near the surface. But we must not overlook the fact that victory over those weaknesses which are the heritage of the material and spiritual domination of the country by another is a necessity from which no government will be able to escape. Let us take the example of work under the colonial regime. The settler never stopped complaining that the native is slow. Today, in certain countries which have become independent, we hear the ruling classes taking up the same cry. The fact is that the settler wanted the native to be enthusiastic. By a sort of process of mystification which constitutes the most sublime type of separation from reality, he wanted to persuade the slave that the land that he worked belonged to him, that the mines where he lost his health were owned by him. The settler was singularly forgetful of the fact that he was growing rich through the death-throes of the slave. In fact what the settler was saying to the native was 'Kill yourself that I may become rich.' Today, we must behave in a different fashion. We ought not to say to the people: 'Kill yourselves that the country may become rich.' If we want to increase the national revenue, and decrease the importing of certain products which are useless, or even harmful, if we want to increase agricultural production and overcome illiteracy, we must explain what we are about. The people must understand what is at stake. Public business ought to be the business of the public. So the necessity of creating a large number of well-informed nuclei at the bottom crops up again. Too often, in fact, we are content to establish national organizations at the top and always in the capital: the Women's Union, the Young People's Federation, Trade Unions, etc. But if one takes the trouble to investigate what is behind the office in the capital, if you go into the inner room where the reports ought to be, you will be shocked by the emptiness, the blank spaces, and the bluff. There must be a basis; there must be cells that supply content and life. The masses should be able to meet together, discuss, propose and receive directions. The citizens should be able to speak, to express themselves and to put forward new ideas. The branch meeting and the committee meeting are liturgical acts. They are privileged occasions given to a human being to listen and to speak. At each meeting, the brain increases its means of participation and the eye discovers a landscape more and more in keeping with human dignity.

The large proportion of young people in the under-developed countries raises specific problems for the government, which must be tackled with lucidity. The young people of the towns, idle and often illiterate, are a prey to all sorts of disintegrating influences. It is to the youth of an under-developed country that the industrialized countries most often offer their pastimes.

Normally, there is a certain homogeneity between the mental and material level of the members of any given society and the pleasures which that society creates for itself. But in under-developed countries, young people have at their disposal leisure occupations designed for the youth of capitalist countries: detective novels, penny-in-the slot machines, sexy photographs, pornographic literature, films banned to those under sixteen, and above all alcohol. In the West, the family circle, the effects of education and the relatively high standard of living of the working classes provide a more or less efficient protection against the harmful action of these pastimes. But in an African country, where mental development is uneven, where the violent collision of two worlds has considerably shaken old traditions and thrown the universe of the perceptions out of focus, the impressionability and sensibility of the young African are at the mercy of the various assaults made upon them by the

very nature of Western culture. His family very often proves itself incapable of showing stability and homogeneity when faced with such attacks.

In this domain, the government's duty is to act as a filter and a stabilizer. But the Youth Commissioners in under-developed countries often make the mistake of imagining their role to be that of Youth Commissioners in frilly developed countries. They speak of strengthening the soul, of developing the body, and of facilitating the growth of sportsmanlike qualities. It is our opinion that they should beware of these conceptions. The young people of an under-developed country are above all idle: occupations must be found for them. For this reason the Youth Commissioners ought for practical purposes to be attached to the Ministry for Labour. The Ministry for Labour, which is a prime necessity in an under-developed country, functions in collaboration with the Ministry for Planning, which is another necessary institution in under-developed countries. The youth of Africa ought not to be sent to sports stadiums but into the fields and into the schools. The stadium ought not to be a show place erected in the towns, but a bit of open ground in the midst of the fields that the young people must reclaim, cultivate and give to the nation. The capitalist conception of sport is fundamentally different from that which should exist in an under-developed country. The African politician should not be preoccupied with turning out sportsmen, but with turning out fully conscious men, who play games as well. If games are not integrated into the national life, that is to say in the building of the nation, and if you turn out national sportsmen and not fully conscious men, you will very quickly see sport rotted by professionalism and commercialism. Sport should not be a pastime or a distraction for the bourgeoisie of the towns. The greatest task before us is to understand at each moment what is happening in our country. We ought not to cultivate the exceptional or to seek for a hero, who is another form of leaden. We ought to uplift the people; we must develop their brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings.

We once more come up against that obsession of ours—which we would like to see shared by all African politicians—about the need for effort to be well-informed, for work which is enlightened and free from its historic intellectual darkness. To hold a responsible position in an under-developed country is to know that in the end everything depends on the education of the masses, on the raising of the level of thought, and on what we are too quick to call 'political teaching.'

In fact, we often believe with criminal superficiality that to educate the masses politically is to deliver a long political harangue from time to time. We think that it is enough that the leader or one of his lieutenants should speak in a pompous tone about the principle events of the day for them to have fulfilled this bounden duty to educate the masses politically. Now, political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is 'to invent souls.' To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. In order to put all this into practice, in order really to incarnate the people, we repeat that there must be decentralization in the extreme. The movement from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top should be a fixed principle, not through concern for formalism but because simply to respect this principle is the guarantee of salvation. It is from the base that forces mount up which supply the summit with its dynamic, and make it possible dialectically for it to leap ahead. Once again we Algerians have been quick to understand these facts, for no member of the government at the head of any recognized state has had the chance of availing himself of such a mission of salvation. For it is the rank-and-file who

are fighting in Algeria, and the rank-and-file know well that without their daily struggle, hard and heroic as it is, the summit would collapse; and in the same way those at the bottom know that without a head and without leadership the base would split apart in incoherence and anarchy. The summit only draws its worth and its strength from the existence of the people at war. Literally, it is the people who freely create a summit for themselves, and not the summit that tolerates the people.

The masses should know that the government and the party are at their service. A deserving people, in other words a people conscious of its dignity, is a people that never forgets these facts. During the colonial occupation the people were told that they must give their lives so that dignity might triumph. But the African peoples quickly came to understand that it was not only the occupying power that threatened their dignity. The African peoples were quick to realize that dignity and sovereignty were exact equivalents, and, in fact, a free people living in dignity is a sovereign people. It is no use demonstrating that the African peoples are childish or weak. A government or a party gets the people it deserves and sooner or later a people gets the government it deserves.

Practical experience in certain regions confirms this point of view. It sometimes happens at meetings that militants use sweeping, dogmatic formulae. The preference for this shortcut, in which spontaneity and over-simple sinking of differences dangerously combine to defeat intellectual elaboration, frequently triumphs. When we meet this shirking of responsibility in a militant it is not enough to tell him he is wrong. We must make him ready for responsibility, encourage him to follow up his chain of reasoning and make him realize the true nature, often shocking, inhuman and in the long run sterile, of such over-simplification.

Nobody, neither leader nor rank-and-file, can hold back the truth. The search for truth in local attitudes is a collective affair. Some are richer in experience, and elaborate their thought more rapidly, and in the past have been able to establish a greater number of mental links. But they ought to avoid riding rough shod over the people, for the success of the decision which is adopted depends upon the coordinated, conscious effort of the whole of the people. No one can get out of the situation scot free. Everyone will be butchered or tortured; and in the framework of the independent nation everyone will go hungry and everyone will suffer in the slump. The collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the top. Yes; everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; there are no innocents and no onlookers. We all have dirty hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the terrifying emptiness of our brains. Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.

The duty of those at the head of the movement is to have the masses behind them. Allegiance presupposes awareness and understanding of the mission which has to be fulfilled; in short, an intellectual position, however embryonic. We must not voodoo the people, nor dissolve them in emotion and confusion. Only those under-developed countries led by revolutionary *elites* who have come up from the people can today allow the entry of the masses upon the scene of history. But, we must repeat, it is absolutely necessary to oppose vigorously and definitively the birth of a national bourgeoisie and a privileged caste. To educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens. As President Sekou Toure aptly remarked in his message to the second congress of African writers:

In the realm of thought, man may claim to be the brain of the world; but in real life where every action affects spiritual and physical existence, the world is always the brain of mankind; for it is at this level that you will find the sum total of the powers and

units of thought, and the dynamic forces of development and improvement; and it is there that energies are merged and the sum of man's intellectual values is finally added together.

Individual experience, because it is national and because it is a link in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world. In the same way that during the period of armed struggle each fighter held the fortune of the nation in his hand, so during the period of national construction each citizen ought to continue in his real, everyday activity to associate himself with the whole of the nation, to incarnate the continuous dialectical truth of the nation and to will the triumph of man in his completeness here and now. If the building of a bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, then that bridge ought not to be built and the citizens can go on swimming across the river or going by boat. The bridge should not be 'parachuted down' from above; it should not be imposed by a *deus ex machina* upon the social scene; on the contrary it should come from the muscles and the brains of the citizens. Certainly, there may well be need of engineers and architects, sometimes completely foreign engineers and architects; but the local party leaders should be always present, so that the new techniques can make their way into the cerebral desert of the citizen, so that the bridge in whole and in part can be taken up and conceived, and the responsibility for it assumed by the citizen. In this way, and in this way only, everything is possible.

A government which calls itself a national government ought to take responsibility for the totality of the nation; and in an under-developed country the young people represent one of the most important sectors. The level of consciousness of young people must be raised; they need enlightenment. If the work of explanation had been carried on among the youth of the nation, and if the Young People's National Union had carried out its task of integrating them into the nation, those mistakes would have been avoided which have threatened or already undermined the future of the Latin American Republics. The army is not always a school of war; more often, it is a school of civic and political education. The soldier of an adult nation is not a simple mercenary but a citizen who by means of arms defends the nation. That is why it is of fundamental importance that the soldier should know that he is in the service of his country and not in the service of his commanding officer, however great that officer's prestige may be. We must take advantage of the national military and civil service in order to raise the level of the national consciousness, and to detribalize and unite the nation. In an under-developed country every effort is made to mobilize men and women as quickly as possible; it must guard against the danger of perpetuating the feudal tradition which holds sacred the superiority of the masculine element over the feminine. Women will have exactly the same place as men, not in the clauses of the constitution but in the life of every day: in the factory, at school and in the parliament. If in the Western countries men are shut up in barracks, that is not to say that this is always the best procedure. Recruits need not necessarily be militarized. The national service may be civil or military, and in any case it is advisable that every able-bodied citizen can at any moment take his place in a fighting unit for the defence of national and social liberties.

It should be possible to carry out large-scale undertakings in the public interest by using recruited labour. This is a marvellous way of stirring up inert districts and of making known to a greater number of citizens the needs of their country. Care must be taken to avoid turning the army into an autonomous body which sooner or later, finding itself idle and without any definite mission, will 'go into politics' and threaten the government. Drawing-room generals, by dint of haunting the corridors of government departments, come to dream of manifestoes. The only way to avoid this menace is to educate the army politically, in other words to nationalize it. In the same way

another urgent task is to increase the militia. In case of war, it is the whole nation which fights and works. It should not include any professional soldiers, and the number of permanent officers should be reduced to a minimum. This is in the first place because officers are very often chosen from the university class, who could be much more useful elsewhere; an engineer is a thousand times more indispensable to his country than an officer; and secondly, because the crystallization of the caste spirit must be avoided. We have seen in the preceding pages that nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a programme. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness. The nation does not exist except in a programme which has been worked out by revolutionary leaders and taken up with full understanding and enthusiasm by the masses. The nation's effort must constantly be adjusted into the general background of underdeveloped countries. The battle-line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligences of men and women. The work of the masses and their will to overcome the evils which have for centuries excluded them from the mental achievements of the past ought to be grafted on to the work and will of all under-developed peoples. On the level of underdeveloped humanity there is a kind of collective effort, a sort of common destiny. The news which interests the Third World does not deal with King Baudouin's marriage nor the scandals of the Italian ruling class. What we want to hear about are the experiments carried out by the Argentinians or the Burmese in their efforts to overcome illiteracy or the dictatorial tendencies of their leaders. It is these things which strengthen us, teach us and increase our efficiency ten times over. As we see it, a programme is necessary for a government which really wants to free the people politically and socially. There must be an economic programme; there must also be a doctrine concerning the division of wealth and social relations. In fact, there must be an idea of man and of the future of humanity; that is to say that no demagogic formula and no collusion with the former occupying power can take the place of a programme. The new peoples, unawakened at first but soon becoming more and more clear-minded, will make strong demands for this programme. The African people and indeed all under-developed peoples, contrary to common belief, very quickly build up a social and political consciousness. What can be dangerous is when they reach the stage of social consciousness before the stage of nationalism. If this happens, we find in under-developed countries fierce demands for social justice which paradoxically are allied with often primitive tribalism. The under-developed peoples behave like starving creatures; this means that the end is very near for those who are having a good time in Africa. Their government will not be able to prolong its own existence indefinitely. A bourgeoisie that provides nationalism alone as food for the masses fails in its mission and gets caught up in a whole series of mishaps. But if nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley. The bourgeois leaders of under-developed countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness. Then the flag and the palace where sits the government cease to be the symbols of the nation. The nation deserts these brightly lit, empty shells and takes shelter in the country, where it is given life and dynamic power. The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. The collective building up of a destiny is the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale. Otherwise there is anarchy, repression and the resurgence of tribal parties and federalism. The na-

tional government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts. No leader, however valuable he may be, can substitute himself for the popular will; and the national government, before concerning itself about international prestige, ought first to give back their dignity to all citizens, fill their minds and feast their eyes with human things, and create a prospect that is human because conscious and sovereign men dwell therein.

Week 10

The Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party (BPP) was founded in Oakland, California in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. It soon saw chapters spring up in a variety of other locations nationwide. Its politics was a heterodox mix of community service, Black nationalism, armed struggle and Third Worldism which varied over time and from chapter to chapter.

Fred Hampton was the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the BPP. His charismatic leadership enabled him to assemble a “rainbow coalition” of political groups in Chicago. He was assassinated by police in a raid in 1969 at the age of 21.

Eldridge Cleaver was a prominent member of the Oakland BPP who split from the Newton wing. He criticized Newton and others for their turn to what he saw as reformist politics and refusal to continue armed struggle.

George Jackson joined the BPP while in prison and achieved fame as a writer. He was killed under suspicious circumstances in 1971 while supposedly attempting to escape from prison.

10.1 Huey P. Newton, The Correct Handling of a Revolution (1967)

The Black masses are handling the resistance incorrectly. When the brothers in East Oakland, having learned their resistance fighting from Watts, amassed the people in the streets, threw bricks and Molotov cocktails to destroy property and create disruption, they were herded into a small area by the Gestapo police and immediately contained by the brutal violence of the oppressor’s storm troops. Although this manner of resistance is sporadic, short-lived, and costly, it has been transmitted across the country to all the ghettos of the Black nation.

The identity of the first man who threw a Molotov cocktail is not known by the masses, yet they respect and imitate his action. In the same way, the actions of the party will be imitated by the people—if the people respect these activities.

The primary job of the party is to provide leadership for the people. It must teach by words and action the correct strategic methods of prolonged resistance. When the people learn that it is no longer advantageous for them to resist by going into the streets in large numbers, and when they see the advantage in the activities of the guerrilla warfare method, they will quickly follow this example.

But first, they must respect the party which is transmitting this message. When the vanguard group destroys the machinery of the oppressor by dealing with him in small groups of three and four, and then escapes the might of the oppressor, the masses will be impressed and more likely to adhere to this correct strategy. When the masses hear that a Gestapo policeman has been executed while sipping coffee at a counter, and the revolutionary executioners fled without being traced, the masses will see the validity of this kind of resistance. It is not necessary to organize thirty million Black people in primary groups of two's and three's, but it is important for the party to show the people how to stage a revolution.

There are three ways one can learn: through study, observation, and experience. Since the Black community is composed basically of activists, observation of or participation in activity are the principle ways the community learns. To learn by studying is good, but to learn by experience is better. Because the Black community is not a reading community it is very important that the vanguard group be essentially activists. Without this knowledge of the Black community a Black revolution in racist America is impossible.

The main function of the party is to awaken the people and teach them the strategic method of resisting a power structure which is prepared not only to combat with massive brutality the people's resistance but to annihilate totally the Black population. If it is learned by the power structure that Black people have "X" number of guns in their possession, that information will not stimulate the power structure to prepare itself with guns; it is already prepared.

The end result of this revolutionary education will be positive for Black people in their resistance, and negative for the power structure in its oppression because the party always exemplifies revolutionary defiance. If the party does not make the people aware of the tools and methods of liberation, there will be no means by which the people can mobilize.

The relationship between the vanguard party and the masses is a secondary relationship. The relationship among the members of the vanguard party is a primary relationship. If the party machinery is to be effective it is important that the members of the party group maintain a face-to-face relationship with each other. It is impossible to put together functionary party machinery or programs without this direct relationship. To minimize the danger of Uncle Tom informers and opportunists the members of the vanguard group should be tested revolutionaries.

The main purpose of the vanguard group should be to raise the consciousness of the masses through educational programs and other activities. The sleeping masses must be bombarded with the correct approach to struggle and the party must use all means available to get this information across to the masses. In order to do so the masses must know that the party exists. A vanguard party is never underground in the beginning of its existence; that would limit its effectiveness and educational goals. How can you teach people if the people do not know and respect you? The party must exist aboveground as long as the dog power structure will allow, and, hopefully, when the party is forced to go underground, the party's message will already have been put across to the people. The vanguard party's activities on the surface will necessarily be short-lived. Thus the party must make a tremendous impact upon the people before it is driven into secrecy. By that time the people will know the party exists and will seek further information about its activities if it is driven underground.

Many would-be revolutionaries work under the fallacious notion that the vanguard party should be a secret organization which the power structure knows nothing about, and that the masses know nothing about except for occasional letters that come to their homes by night. Underground parties cannot distribute leaflets announcing an underground meeting. Such contradictions and inconsistencies are not recognized by these so-called revolutionaries. They are, in fact, afraid of the

very danger that they are asking the people to confront. These so-called revolutionaries want the people to say what they themselves are afraid to say, to do what they themselves are afraid to do. That kind of revolutionary is a coward and a hypocrite. A true revolutionary realizes that if he is sincere death is imminent. The things he is saying and doing are extremely dangerous. Without this realization it is pointless to proceed as a revolutionary.

If these impostors would investigate the history of revolution they would see that the vanguard group always starts out aboveground and is driven underground by the aggressor. The Cuban Revolution is an example: When Fidel Castro started to resist the butcher Batista and the American running dogs, he began by speaking publicly on the University of Havana campus. He was later driven to the hills. His impact upon the dispossessed people of Cuba was tremendous and his teachings were received with much respect. When he went into hiding, the Cuban people searched him out, going to the hills to find him and his band of twelve.

Castro handled the revolutionary struggle correctly, and if the Chinese Revolution is investigated it will be seen that the Communist Party operated quite openly in order to muster support from the masses. There are many more examples of successful revolutionary struggle from which one can learn the correct approach: the revolution in Kenya, the Algerian Revolution discussed in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, the Russian Revolution, the works of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, and a host of others.

Millions and millions of oppressed people may not know members of the vanguard party personally but they will learn of its activities and its proper strategy for liberation through an indirect acquaintance provided by the mass media. But it is not enough to rely on the media of the power structure; it is of prime importance that the vanguard party develop its own communications organ, such as a newspaper, and at the same time provide strategic revolutionary art, and destruction of the oppressor's machinery. For example in Watts the economy and property of the oppressor was destroyed to such an extent that no matter how the oppressor tried in his press to whitewash the activities of the Black brothers, the real nature and cause of the activity was communicated to every Black community. And no matter how the oppressor tried in his own media to distort and confuse the message of Brother Stokely Carmichael, Black people all over the country understood it perfectly and welcomed it.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense teaches that, in the final analysis the guns, hand grenades, bazookas, and other equipment necessary for defense must be supplied by the power structure. As exemplified by the Vietcong, these weapons must be taken from the oppressor. Therefore, the greater the military preparation on the part of the oppressor, the greater the availability of weapons for the Black community. It is believed by some hypocrites that when the people are taught by the vanguard group to prepare for resistance, this only brings 'the man' down on them with increasing violence and brutality; but the fact is that when the man becomes more oppressive he only heightens the revolutionary fervor. So if things get worse for oppressed people they will feel the need for revolution and resistance. The people make revolution; the oppressors, by their brutal actions, cause resistance by the people. The vanguard party only teaches the correct methods of resistance.

The complaint of the hypocrites that the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense is exposing the people to deeper suffering is an incorrect observation. By their rebellions in the Black communities across the country the people have proved that they will not tolerate any more oppression by the racist dog police. They are looking now for guidance to extend and strengthen their resistance struggle. The vanguard party exemplify the characteristics that make them worthy of leadership.

10.2 Fred Hampton, Power Anywhere Where There's People (1969)

Power anywhere where there's people. Power anywhere where there's people. Let me give you an example of teaching people. Basically, the way they learn is observation and participation. You know a lot of us go around and joke ourselves and believe that the masses have PhDs, but that's not true. And even if they did, it wouldn't make any difference. Because with some things, you have to learn by seeing it or either participating in it. And you know yourselves that there are people walking around your community today that have all types of degrees that should be at this meeting but are not here. Right? Because you can have as many degrees as a thermometer. If you don't have any practice, they you can't walk across the street and chew gum at the same time.

Let me tell you how Huey P. Newton, the leader, the organizer, the founder, the main man of the Black Panther Party, went about it.

The community had a problem out there in California. There was an intersection, a four-way intersection; a lot of people were getting killed, cars running over them, and so the people went down and redressed their grievances to the government. You've done it before. I know you people in the community have. And they came back and the pigs said "No! You can't have any." Oh, they don't usually say you can't have it. They've gotten a little hipper than that now. That's what those degrees on the thermometer will get you. They tell you "Okay, we'll deal with it. Why don't you come back next meeting and waste some time?"

And they get you wound up in an excursion of futility, and you be in a cycle of insaneness, and you be goin' back and goin' back, and goin' back, and goin' back so many times that you're already crazy.

So they tell you, they say, "Okay niggers, what you want?" And then you jump up and you say, "Well, it's been so long, we don't know what we want," and then you walk out of the meeting and you're gone and they say, "Well, you niggers had your chance, didn't you?"

Let me tell you what Huey P. Newton did.

Huey Newton went and got Bobby Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther Party on a national level. Bobby Seale got his 9mm, that's a pistol. Huey P. Newton got his shotgun and got some stop signs and got a hammer. Went down to the intersection, gave his shotgun to Bobby, and Bobby had his 9mm. He said, "You hold this shotgun. Anybody mess with us, blow their brains out." He put those stop signs up.

There were no more accidents, no more problem.

Now they had another situation. That's not that good, you see, because its two people dealing with a problem. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, no matter how bad they may be, cannot deal with the problem. But let me explain to you who the real heroes are.

Next time, there was a similar situation, another four-way corner. Huey went and got Bobby, went and got his 9mm, got his shotgun, got his hammer and got more stop signs. Placed those stop signs up, gave the shotgun to Bobby, told Bobby "If anybody mess with us while we're putting these stop signs up, protect the people and blow their brains out." What did the people do? They observed it again. They participated in it. Next time they had another four-way intersection. Problems there; they had accidents and death. This time, the people in the community went and got their shotguns, got their hammers, got their stop signs.

Now, let me show you how we're gonna try to do it in the Black Panther Party here. We just got back from the south side. We went out there. We went out there and we got to arguing with the pigs or the pigs got to arguing—he said, "Well, Chairman Fred, you supposed to be so bad,

why don't you go and shoot some of those policemen? You always talking about you got your guns and got this, why don't you go shoot some of them?"

And I've said, "you've just broken a rule. As a matter of fact, even though you have on a uniform it doesn't make me any difference. Because I don't care if you got on nine uniforms, and 100 badges. When you step outside the realm of legality and into the realm of illegality, then I feel that you should be arrested." And I told him, "You being what they call the law of entrapment, you tried to make me do something that was wrong, you encouraged me, you tried to incite me to shoot a pig. And that ain't cool, Brother, you know the law, don't you?"

I told that pig that, I told him "You got a gun, pig?" I told him, "You gotta get your hands up against the wall. We're gonna do what they call a citizen's arrest." This fool don't know what this is. I said, "Now you be just as calm as you can and don't make too many quick moves, 'cause we don't wanna have to hit you."

And I told him like he always told us, I told him, "Well, I'm here to protect you. Don't worry about a thing, I'm here for your benefit." So I sent another Brother to call the pigs. You gotta do that in a citizen's arrest. He called the pigs. Here come the pigs with carbines and shotguns, walkin' out there. They came out there talking about how they're gonna arrest Chairman Fred. And I said, "No fool. This is the man you got to arrest. He's the one that broke the law." And what did they do? They bugged their eyes, and they couldn't stand it. You know what they did? They were so mad, they were so angry that they told me to leave.

And what happened? All those people were out there on 63rd Street. What did they do? They were around there laughing and talking with me while I was making the arrest. They looked at me while I was rapping and heard me while I was rapping. So the next time that the pig comes on 63rd Street, because of the thing that our Minister of Defense calls observation and participation, that pig might be arrested by anybody!

So what did we do? We were out there educating the people. How did we educate them? Basically, the way people learn, by observation and participation. And that's what were trying to do. That's what we got to do here in this community. And a lot of people don't understand, but there's three basic things that you got to do anytime you intend to have yourself a successful revolution.

A lot of people get the word revolution mixed up and they think revolution's a bad word. Revolution is nothing but like having a sore on your body and then you put something on that sore to cure that infection. And I'm telling you that we're living in an infectious society right now. I'm telling you that were living in a sick society. And anybody that endorses integrating into this sick society before its cleaned up is a man who's committing a crime against the people.

If you walk past a hospital room and see a sign that says "Contaminated" and then you try to lead people into that room, either those people are mighty dumb, you understand me, 'cause if they weren't, they'd tell you that you are an unfair, unjust leader that does not have your followers' interests in mind. And what we're saying is simply that leaders have got to become, we've got to start making them accountable for what they do. They're goin' around talking about so-and-so's an Uncle Tom so we're gonna open up a cultural center and teach him what blackness is. And this nigger is more aware than you and me and Malcolm and Martin Luther King and everybody else put together. That's right. They're the ones that are most aware. They're most aware, 'cause they're the ones that are gonna open up the center. They're gonna tell you where bones come from in Africa that you can't even pronounce the names. That's right. They'll be telling you about Chaka, the leader of the Bantu freedom fighters, and Jomo Kenyatta, those dingo-dingas. They'll be running all of that down to you. They know about it all. But the point is they do what they're doing because it is beneficial and it is profitable for them.

You see, people get involved in a lot of things that's profitable to them, and we've got to make it less profitable. We've got to make it less beneficial. I'm saying that any program that's brought into our community should be analyzed by the people of that community. It should be analyzed to see that it meets the relevant needs of that community. We don't need no niggers coming into our community to be having no company to open business for the niggers. There's too many niggers in our community that can't get crackers out of the business that they're gonna open.

We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor, that the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I'm talking about the white masses, I'm talking about the black masses, and the brown masses, and the yellow masses, too. We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity. We say you don't fight capitalism with no black capitalism; you fight capitalism with socialism.

We ain't gonna fight no reactionary pigs who run up and down the street being reactionary; we're gonna organize and dedicate ourselves to revolutionary political power and teach ourselves the specific needs of resisting the power structure, arm ourselves, and we're gonna fight reactionary pigs with INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION. That's what it has to be. The people have to have the power: it belongs to the people.

We have to understand very clearly that there's a man in our community called a capitalist. Sometimes he's black and sometimes he's white. But that man has to be driven out of our community, because anybody who comes into the community to make profit off the people by exploiting them can be defined as a capitalist. And we don't care how many programs they have, how long a dashiki they have. Because political power does not flow from the sleeve of a dashiki; political power flows from the barrel of a gun. It flows from the barrel of a gun!

A lot of us running around talking about politics don't even know what politics is. Did you ever see something and pull it and you take it as far as you can and it almost outstretches itself and it goes into something else? If you take it so far that it is two things? As a matter of fact, some things if you stretch it so far, it'll be another thing. Did you ever cook something so long that it turns into something else? Ain't that right?

That's what we're talking about with politics.

That politics ain't nothing, but if you stretch it so long that it can't go no further, then you know what you got on your hands? You got an antagonistic contradiction. And when you take that contradiction to the highest level and stretch it as far as you can stretch it, you got what you call war. Politics is war without bloodshed, and war is politics with bloodshed. If you don't understand that, you can be a Democrat, Republican, you can be Independent, you can be anything you want to, you ain't nothing.

We don't want any of those niggers and any of these hunkies and nobody else, radicals or nobody talking about, "I'm on the Independence ticket." That means you sell out the Republicans; Independent means you're out for graft and you'll sell out to the highest bidder. You understand?

We want people who want to run on the People's Party, because the people are gonna run it whether they like it or not. The people have proved that they can run it. They run it in China, they're gonna run it right here. They can call it what they want to, they can talk about it. They can call it communism, and think that that's gonna scare somebody, but it ain't gonna scare nobody.

We had the same thing happen out on 37th Road. They came out to 37th road where our Breakfast For Children program is, and started getting those women who were kind of older, around 58—that's, you know, I call that older 'cause I'm young. I ain't 20, right, right! But you see, they're gonna get them and brainwash them. And you ain't seen nothin' till you see one of them beautiful

Sisters with their hair kinda startin' getting grey, and they ain't got many teeth, and they were tearin' them policemen up! They were tearing 'em up! The pigs would come up to them and say "You like communism?"

The pigs would come up to them and say, "You scared of communism?" And the Sisters would say, "No scared of it, I ain't never heard of it."

"You like socialism?"

"No scared of it. I ain't never heard of it."

The pigs, they be crackin' up, because they enjoyed seeing these people frightened of these words.

"You like capitalism?"

Yeah, well, that's what I live with. I like it.

"You like the Breakfast For Children program, nigger?"

"Yeah, I like it."

And the pigs say, "Oh-oh." The pigs say, "Well, the Breakfast For Children program is a socialistic program. Its a communistic program."

And the women said, "Well, I tell you what, boy. I've been knowing you since you were knee-high to a grasshopper, nigger. And I don't know if I like communism and I don't know if I like socialism. But I know that that Breakfast For Children program feeds my kids, nigger. And if you put your hands on that Breakfast For Children program, I'm gonna come off this can and I'm gonna beat your ass like a ..."

That's what they be saying. That's what they be saying, and it is a beautiful thing. And that's what the Breakfast For Children program is. A lot of people think it is charity, but what does it do? It takes the people from a stage to another stage. Any program that's revolutionary is an advancing program. Revolution is change. Honey, if you just keep on changing, before you know it, in fact, not even knowing what socialism is, you don't have to know what it is, they're endorsing it, they're participating in it, and they're supporting socialism.

And a lot of people will tell you, way, well, the people don't have any theory, they need some theory. They need some theory even if they don't have any practice. And the Black Panther Party tells you that if a man tells you that he's the type of man who has you buying candy bars and eating the wrapping and throwing the candy away, he'd have you walking East when you're supposed to be walking West. It's true. If you listen to what the pig says, you be walkin' outside when the sun is shining with your umbrella over your head. And when it's raining you'll be goin' outside leaving your umbrella inside. That's right. You gotta get it together. I'm saying that's what they have you doing.

Now, what do WE do? We say that the Breakfast For Children program is a socialistic program. It teaches the people basically that by practice, we thought up and let them practice that theory and inspect that theory. What's more important? You learn something just like everybody else.

Let me try to break it down to you.

You say this Brother here goes to school 8 years to be an auto mechanic. And that teacher who used to be an auto mechanic, he tells him, "Well, nigger, you gotta go on what we call on-the-job-training." And he says, "Damn, with all this theory I got, I gotta go to on-the-job-training? What for?"

He said, "On on-the-job-training he works with me. I've been here for 20 years. When I started work, they didn't even have auto mechanics. I ain't got no theory, I just got a whole bunch of practice."

What happened? A car came in making a whole lot of funny noise. This Brother here go get his book. He on page one, he ain't got to page 200. I'm sitting here listening to the car. He says, "What do you think it is?"

I say, "I think its the carburetor."

He says, "No I don't see anywhere in here where it says a carburetor make no noise like that." And he says, "How do you know its the carburetor?"

I said, "Well, nigger, with all them degrees as many as a thermometer, around 20 years ago, 19 to be exact, I was listening to the same kind of noise. And what I did was I took apart the voltage regulator and it wasn't that. Then I took apart the alternator and it wasn't that. I took apart the generator brushes and it wasn't that. I took apart the generator and it wasn't that. I took apart the generator and it wasn't even that. After I took apart all that I finally got to the carburetor and when I got to the carburetor I found that that's what it was. And I told myself that 'fool, next time you hear this sound you better take apart the carburetor first.'"

How did he learn? He learned through practice.

I don't care how much theory you got, if it don't have any practice applied to it, then that theory happens to be irrelevant. Right? Any theory you get, practice it. And when you practice it you make some mistakes. When you make a mistake, you correct that theory, and then it will be corrected theory that will be able to be applied and used in any situation. Thats what we've got to be able to do.

Every time I speak in a church I always try to say something, you know, about Martin Luther King. I have a lot of respect for Martin Luther King. I think he was one of the greatest orators that the country ever produced. And I listened to anyone who speaks well, because I like to listen to that. Martin Luther King said that it might look dark sometime, and it might look dark over here on the North Side. Maybe you thought the room was going to be packed with people and maybe you thought you might have to turn some people away and you might not have enough people here. Maybe some of the people you think should be here are not here and you think that, well if they're not here then it won't be as good as we thought it could have been. And maybe you thought that you need more people here than you have here. Maybe you think that the pigs are going to be able to pressure you and put enough pressure to squash your movement even before it starts. But Martin Luther King said that he heard somewhere that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. And we're not worried about it being dark. He said that the arm of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward heaven.

We got Huey P. Newton in jail, and Eldridge Cleaver underground. And Alprentice Bunchy Carter has been murdered; Bobby Hutton and John Huggins been murdered. And a lot of people think that the Black Panther Party in a sense is giving up. But let us say this: That we've made the kind of commitment to the people that hardly anyone else has ever made.

We have decided that although some of us come from what some of you would call petty-bourgeois families, though some of us could be in a sense on what you call the mountaintop. We could be integrated into the society working with people that we may never have a chance to work with. Maybe we could be on the mountaintop and maybe we wouldn't have to be hidin' when we go to speak places like this. Maybe we wouldn't have to worry about court cases and going to jail and being sick. We say that even though all of those luxuries exist on the mountaintop, we understand that you people and your problems are right here in the valley.

We in the Black Panther Party, because of our dedication and understanding, went into the valley knowing that the people are in the valley, knowing that our plight is the same plight as the people in the valley, knowing that our enemies are on the mountain, to our friends are in the valley,

and even though its nice to be on the mountaintop, we're going back to the valley. Because we understand that there's work to be done in the valley, and when we get through with this work in the valley, then we got to go to the mountaintop. We're going to the mountaintop because there's a motherfucker on the mountaintop that's playing King, and he's been bullshitting us. And we've got to go up on the mountain top not for the purpose of living his life style and living like he lives. We've got to go up on the mountain top to make this motherfucker understand, goddamnit, that we are coming from the valley!

10.3 Eldridge Cleaver, On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party (1969)

We have said: the ideology of the Black Panther Party is the historical experience of Black people and the wisdom gained by Black people in their 400 year long struggle against the system of racist oppression and economic exploitation in Babylon, interpreted through the prism of the Marxist-Leninist analysis by our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton.

However, we must place heavy emphasis upon the last part of that definition—'interpreted...by our Minister of Defense'. The world of Marxism-Leninism has become a jungle of opinion in which conflicting interpretations, from Right Revisionism to Left Dogmatism, foist off their reactionary and blind philosophies as revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Around the world and in every nation people, all who call themselves Marxist-Leninists, are at each other's throats. Such a situation presents serious problems to a young party, such as ours, that is still in the process of refining its ideology.

When we say that we are Marxist-Leninists, we mean that we have studied and understood the classical principles of scientific socialism and that we have adapted these principles to our own situation for ourselves. However, we do not move with a closed mind to new ideas or information. At the same time, we know that we must rely upon our own brains in solving ideological problems as they relate to us.

For too long Black people have relied upon the analyses and ideological perspectives of others. Our struggle has reached a point now where it would be absolutely suicidal for us to continue this posture of dependency. No other people in the world are in the same position as we are, and no other people in the world can get us out of it except ourselves. There are those who are all too willing to do our thinking for us, even if it gets us killed. However, they are not willing to follow through and do our dying for us. If thoughts bring about our deaths, let them at least be our own thoughts, so that we will have broken, once and for all, with the flunkeyism of dying for every cause and every error—except our own.

One of the great contributions of Huey P. Newton is that he gave the Black Panther Party a firm ideological foundation that frees us from ideological flunkeyism and opens up the path to the future—a future to which we must provide new ideological formulations to fit our ever changing situation.

Much—most—of the teachings of Huey P. Newton are unknown to the people because Huey has been placed in a position where it is impossible for him to really communicate with us. And much that he taught while he was free has gotten distorted and watered down precisely because the Black Panther Party has been too hung up in relating to the courts and trying to put on a good face in order to help lawyers convince juries of the justice of our cause. This whole court hang-up has created much confusion.

For instance, many people confuse the Black Panther Party with the Free Huey Movement or

the many other mass activities that we have been forced to indulge in in order to build mass support for our comrades who have gotten captured by the pigs. We are absolutely correct in indulging in such mass activity. But we are wrong when we confuse our mass line with our party line.

Essentially, what Huey did was to provide the ideology and the methodology for organizing the Black Urban Lumpenproletariat. Armed with this ideological perspective and method, Huey transformed the Black lumpenproletariat from the forgotten people at the bottom of society into the vanguard of the proletariat.

There is a lot of confusion over whether we are members of the Working Class or whether we are Lumpenproletariat. It is necessary to confront this confusion, because it has a great deal to do with the strategy and tactics that we follow and with our strained relations with the White radicals from the oppressor section of Babylon.

Some so-called Marxist-Leninists will attack us for what we have to say, but that is a good thing and not a bad thing because some people call themselves Marxist-Leninists who are the downright enemies of Black people. Later for them. We want them to step boldly forward, as they will do—blinded by their own stupidity and racist arrogance—so that it will be easier for us to deal with them in the future.

We make these criticisms in a fraternal spirit of how some Marxist-Leninists apply the classical principles to the specific situation that exists in the United States because we believe in the need for a unified revolutionary movement in the United States, a movement that is informed by the revolutionary principles of scientific socialism. Huey P. Newton says that “power is the ability to define phenomena and make it act in a desired manner,” And we need power, desperately, to counter the power of the pigs that now bears so heavily upon us.

Ideology is a comprehensive definition of a status quo that takes into account both the history and the future of that status quo and serves as the social glue that holds a people together and through which a people relate to the world and other groups of people in the world. The correct ideology is an invincible weapon against the oppressor in our struggle for freedom and liberation.

Marx defined the epoch of the bourgeoisie and laid bare the direction of the Proletarian future. He analyzed Capitalism and defined the method of its doom: VIOLENT REVOLUTION BY THE PROLETARIAT AGAINST THE BOURGEOIS STATE APPARATUS OF CLASS OPPRESSION AND REPRESSION, REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AGAINST THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY CLASS VIOLENCE PERPETRATED THROUGH THE SPECIAL REPRESSIVE FORCE OF THE ARMED TENTACLES OF THE STATE.

This great definition by Marx and Engels became the mightiest weapon in the hands of oppressed people in the history of ideology. It marks a gigantic advance for all mankind. And since Marx's time, his definition has been strengthened, further elaborated, illumined, and further refined.

But Marxism has never really dealt with the United States of America. There have been some very nice attempts. People have done the best that they know how. However, in the past, Marxist-Leninists in the United States have relied too heavily upon foreign, imported analyses and have seriously distorted the realities of the American scene. We might say that the Marxism-Leninism of the past belongs to the gestation period of Marxism-Leninism in the United States, and that now is the time when a new, strictly American ideological synthesis will arise, springing up from the hearts and souls of the oppressed people inside Babylon, and uniting these people and hurling them mightily, from the force of their struggle, into the future. The swiftly developing revolution in America is like the gathering of a mighty storm, and nothing can stop that storm from finally bursting, inside America, washing away the pigs of the power structure and all their foul, oppressive works. And the children of the pigs and the oppressed people will dance and spit upon the common

graves of these pigs.

There are some Black people in the United States who are absolutely happy, who do not feel themselves to be oppressed, and who think that they are free. Some even believe that the President wouldn't lie, and that he is more or less an honest man; that Supreme Court decisions were almost written by god in person; that the Police are Guardians of the Law; and that people who do not have jobs are just plain lazy and good-for nothing and should be severely punished. These are like crabs that must be left to boil a little longer in the pot of oppression before they will be ready and willing to relate. But the overwhelming majority of Black people are uptight, know that they are oppressed and not free; and they wouldn't believe Nixon if he confessed to being a pig; they don't relate to the Supreme Court or any other court; and they know that the racist pig cops are their sworn enemies. As for poverty, they know what it is all about.

These millions of Black people have no political representation, they are unorganized, and they do not own or control any of the natural resources; they neither own nor control any of the industrial machinery, and their daily life is a hustle to make it by any means necessary in the struggle to survive.

Every Black person knows that the wind may change at any given moment and that the Lynch Mob, made up of White members of the "Working Class," might come breathing down his neck if not kicking down his door. It is because of these factors that when we begin to talk about being Marxist-Leninists, we must be very careful to make it absolutely clear just what we are talking about.

On the subject of racism, Marxism-Leninism offers us very little assistance. In fact, there is much evidence that Marx and Engels were themselves racists—just like their White brothers and sisters of their era, and just as many Marxist-Leninists of our own time are also racists. Historically, Marxism-Leninism has been an outgrowth of European problems and it has been primarily preoccupied with finding solutions to European problems.

With the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948 and the People's Republic of China in 1949, something new was injected into Marxism-Leninism, and it ceased to be just a narrow, exclusively European phenomenon. Comrade Kim il Sung and Comrade Mao Tse-Tung applied the classical principles of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions in their own countries and thereby made the ideology into something useful for their people. But they rejected that part of the analysis that was not beneficial to them and had only to do with the welfare of Europe.

Given the racist history of the United States, it is very difficult for Black people to comfortably call themselves Marxist-Leninists or anything else that takes its name from White people. It's like praying to Jesus, a White man. We must emphasize the fact that Marx and Lenin didn't invent Socialism. They only added their contributions, enriching the doctrine, just as many others did before them and after them. And we must remember that Marx and Lenin didn't organize the Black Panther Party. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale did.

Not until we reach Fanon do we find a major Marxist-Leninist theoretician who was primarily concerned about the problems of Black people, wherever they may be found. And even Fanon, in his published works, was primarily focused on Africa. It is only indirectly that his works are beneficial to Afro-Americans. It is just easier to relate to Fanon because he is clearly free of that racist bias that blocks out so much about the Black man in the hands of Whites who are primarily interested in themselves and the problems of their own people. But even though we are able to relate heavily to Fanon, he has not given us the last word on applying the Marxist-Leninist analysis to our problems inside the United States. No one is going to do this for us because no one can. We have to do it ourselves, and until we do, we are going to be uptight.

We must take the teachings of Huey P. Newton as our foundation and go from there. Any other course will bring us to a sorry and regrettable end.

Fanon delivered a devastating attack upon Marxism-Leninism for its narrow preoccupation with Europe and the affairs and salvation of White folks, while lumping all third world peoples into the category of the Lumpenproletariat and then forgetting them there; Fanon unearthed the category of the Lumpenproletariat and began to deal with it, recognizing that vast majorities of the colonized people fall into that category. It is because of the fact that Black people in the United States are also colonized that Fanon's analysis is so relevant to us.

After studying Fanon, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale began to apply his analysis of colonized people to Black people in the United States. They adopted the Fanonian perspective, but they gave it a uniquely Afro-American content.

Just as we must make the distinctions between the mother country and the colony when dealing with Black people and White people as a whole, we must also make this distinction when we deal with the categories of the Working Class and the Lumpenproletariat.

We have, in the United States, a "Mother Country Working Class" and a "Working Class from the Black Colony." We also have a Mother Country Lumpenproletariat and a Lumpenproletariat from the Black Colony. Inside the Mother Country, these categories are fairly stable, but when we look at the Black Colony, we find that the hard and fast distinctions melt away. This is because of the leveling effect of the colonial process and the fact that all Black people are colonized, even if some of them occupy favored positions in the schemes of the Mother Country colonizing exploiters.

There is a difference between the problems of the Mother Country Working Class and the Working Class from the Black Colony. There is also a difference between the Mother Country Lumpen and the Lumpen from the Black Colony. We have nothing to gain from trying to smooth over these differences as though they don't exist, because they are objective facts that must be dealt with. To make this point clear, we have only to look at the long and bitter history of the struggles of Black Colony Workers fighting for democracy inside Mother Country Labor Unions.

Historically, we have fallen into the trap of criticizing mother country labor unions and workers for the racism as an explanation for the way they treat Black workers. Of course, they are racist, but this is not the full explanation.

White workers belong to a totally different world than that of Black workers. They are caught up in a totally different economic, political, and social reality, and on the basis of this distinct reality, the pigs of the power structure and treacherous labor leaders find it very easy to manipulate them with Babylonian racism.

This complex reality presents us with many problems, and only through proper analysis can these problems be solved. The lack of a proper analysis is responsible for the ridiculous approach to these problems that we find among Mother Country Marxist-Leninists. And their improper analysis leads them to advocate solutions that are doomed to failure in advance. The key area of the confusion has to do with falsely assuming the existence of one All-American Proletariat; one All-American Working Class; and one All-American Lumpenproletariat.

O.K. We are Lumpen. Right on. The Lumpenproletariat are all those who have no secure relationship or vested interest in the means of production and the institutions of capitalist society. That part of the "Industrial Reserve Army" held perpetually in reserve; who have never worked and never will; who can't find a job; who are unskilled and unfit; who have been displaced by machines, automation, and cybernation, and were never "retained or invested with new skills"; all those on Welfare or receiving State Aid.

Also the so-called "Criminal Element," those who live by their wits, existing off that which they

rip off, who stick guns in the faces of businessmen and say “stick ’em up,” or “give it up”! Those who don’t even want a job, who hate to work and can’t relate to punching some pig’s time clock, who would rather punch a pig in the mouth and rob him than punch that same pig’s time clock and work for him, those whom Huey P. Newton calls “the illegitimate capitalists.” In short, all those who simply have been locked out of the economy and robbed of their rightful social heritage.

But even though we are Lumpen, we are still members of the Proletariat, a category which theoretically cuts across national boundaries but which in practice leaves something to be desired.

Contradictions within the Proletariat of the USA

In both the Mother Country and the Black Colony, the Working Class is the Right Wing of the Proletariat, and the Lumpenproletariat is the Left Wing. Within the Working Class itself, we have a major contradiction between the Unemployed and the Employed. And we definitely have a major contradiction between the Working Class and the Lumpen.

Some blind so-called Marxist-Leninists accuse the Lumpen of being parasites upon the Working Class. This is a stupid charge derived from reading too many of Marx’s footnotes and taking some of his offhand scurrilous remarks for holy writ. In reality, it is accurate to say that the Working Class, particularly the American Working Class, is a parasite upon the heritage of mankind, of which the Lumpen has been totally robbed by the rigged system of Capitalism which in turn, has thrown the majority of mankind upon the junkheap while it buys off a percentage with jobs and security.

The Working Class that we must deal with today shows little resemblance to the Working Class of Marx’s day. In the days of its infancy, insecurity, and instability, the Working Class was very revolutionary and carried forward the struggle against the bourgeoisie. But through long and bitter struggles, the Working Class has made some inroads into the Capitalist system, carving out a comfortable niche for itself. The advent of Labor Unions, Collective Bargaining, the Union Shop, Social Security, and other special protective legislation has castrated the Working Class, transforming it into the bought-off Labor Movement—a most un-revolutionary, reformist minded movement that is only interested in higher wages and more job security. The Labor Movement has abandoned all basic criticism of the Capitalist system of exploitation itself. The George Meanys, Walter Reuthers, and A. Phillip Randolphs may correctly be labelled traitors to the proletariat as a whole, but they accurately reflect and embody the outlook and aspirations of the Working Class. The Communist Party of the United States of America, at its poorly attended meetings, may raise the roof with its proclamations of being the Vanguard of the Working Class, but the Working Class itself looks upon the Democratic Party as the legitimate vehicle of its political salvation.

As a matter of fact, the Working Class of our time has become a new industrial elite, resembling more the chauvinistic elites of the selfish craft and trade guilds of Marx’s time than the toiling masses ground down in abject poverty. Every job on the market in the American Economy today demands as high a complexity of skills as did the jobs in the elite trade and craft guilds of Marx’s time.

In a highly mechanized economy, it cannot be said that the fantastically high productivity is the product solely of the Working Class. Machines and computers are not members of the Working Class, although some spokesmen for the Working Class, particularly some Marxist-Leninists, seem to think like machines and computers.

The flames of revolution, which once raged like an inferno in the heart of the Working Class, in our day have dwindled into a flickering candle light, only powerful enough to bounce the Working

Class back and forth like a ping pong ball between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party every four years, never once even glancing at the alternatives on the Left.

Who Speaks for the Lumpen Proletariat?

Some Marxist-Leninists are guilty of that class egotism and hypocrisy often displayed by superior classes to those beneath them on the social scale. On the one hand, they freely admit that their organizations are specifically designed to represent the interests of the Working Class. But then they go beyond that to say that by representing the interests of the Working Class, they represent the interest of the Proletariat as a whole. This is clearly not true. This is a fallacious assumption based upon the egotism of these organizations and is partly responsible for their miserable failure to make a revolution in Babylon.

And since there clearly is a contradiction between the right wing and the left wing of the Proletariat, just as the right wing has created its own organizations, it is necessary for the left wing to have its form of organization to represent its interests against all hostile classes—including the Working Class.

The contradiction between the Lumpen and the Working Class is very serious because it even dictates a different strategy and set of tactics. The students focus their rebellions on the campuses, and the Working Class focuses its rebellions on the factories and picket lines. But the Lumpen finds itself in the peculiar position of being unable to find a job and therefore is unable to attend the Universities. The Lumpen has no choice but to manifest its rebellion in the University of the Streets.

It's very important to recognize that the streets belong to the Lumpen, and that it is in the streets that the Lumpen will make their rebellion.

One outstanding characteristic of the liberation struggle of Black people in the United States has been that most of the activity has taken place in the streets. This is because, by and large, the rebellions have been spearheaded by Black Lumpen.

It is because of Black people's lumpen relationship to the means of production and the institutions of the society that they are unable to manifest their rebellion around those means of production and institutions. But this does not mean that the rebellions that take place in the streets are not legitimate expressions of an oppressed people. These are the means of rebellion left open to the Lumpen.

The Lumpen have been locked outside of the economy. And when the Lumpen does engage in direct action against the system of oppression, it is often greeted by hoots and howls from the spokesmen of the Working Class in chorus with the mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie. These talkers like to put down the struggles of the Lumpen as being "spontaneous" (perhaps because they themselves did not order the actions!), "unorganized," and "chaotic and undirected." But these are only prejudiced analyses made from the narrow perspective of the Working Class. But the Lumpen moves anyway, refusing to be straight-jacketed or controlled by the tactics dictated by the conditions of life and the relationship to the means of production of the Working Class.

The Lumpen finds itself in the position where it is very difficult for it to manifest its complaints against the system. The Working Class has the possibility of calling a strike against the factory and the employer and through the mechanism of Labor Unions they can have some arbitration or some process through which its grievances are manifested. Collective bargaining is the way out of the pit of oppression and exploitation discovered by the Working Class, but the Lumpen has no opportunity to do any collective bargaining. The Lumpen has no institutionalized focus in Capitalist society, It

has no immediate oppressor except perhaps the Pig Police with which it is confronted daily.

So that the very conditions of life of the Lumpen dictates the so-called spontaneous reactions against the system, and because the Lumpen is in this extremely oppressed condition, it therefore has an extreme reaction against the system as a whole. It sees itself as being bypassed by all of the organizations, even by the Labor Unions, and even by the Communist Parties that despise it and look down upon it and consider it to be, in the words of Karl Marx, the father of Communist Parties, “The Scum Layer of the Society.” The Lumpen is forced to create its own forms of rebellion that are consistent with its condition in life and with its relationship to the means of production and the institutions of society. That is, to strike out at all the structures around it, including at the reactionary Right Wing of the Proletariat when it gets in the way of revolution.

The faulty analyses which the ideologies of the Working Class have made, of the true nature of the Lumpen, are greatly responsible for the retardation of the development of the revolution in urban situations. It can be said that the true revolutionaries in the urban centers of the world have been analyzed out of the revolution by some Marxist-Leninists.

10.4 Huey P. Newton, On The Defection of Eldridge Cleaver from the Black Panther Party and the Defection of the Black Panther Party From the Black Community (1971)

The Black Panther Party bases its ideology and philosophy on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, using dialectical materialism as our analytical method. As dialectical materialists we recognize that contradictions can lead to development. The internal struggle of opposites based upon their unity causes matter to have motion as a part of the process of development. We recognize that nothing in nature stands outside of dialectics, even the Black Panther Party. But we welcome these contradictions, because they clarify and advance our struggle. We had a contradiction with our former Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver. But we understand this as necessary to our growth. Out of this contradiction has come new growth and a new return to the original vision of the Party.

Early in the development of the Black Panther Party I wrote an essay titled “The Correct Handling of a Revolution.” This was in response to another contradiction—the criticisms raised against the Party by the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). At that time RAM criticized us for our above-ground action—openly displaying weapons and talking about the necessity for the community to arm itself for its own self-defense. RAM said that they were underground, and saw this as the correct way to handle a revolution. I responded to them by pointing out that you must establish your organization above ground so that the people will relate to it in a way that will be positive and progressive to them. When you go underground without doing this, you bury yourself so deeply that the people can neither relate to nor contact you. Then the terrorism of the underground organization will be just that—striking fear into the hearts of the very people whose interest the organization claims to be defending—because the people cannot relate to them and there is nobody there to interpret their actions. You have to set up a program of practical action and be a model for the community to follow and appreciate.

The original vision of the Party was to develop a lifeline to the people, by serving their needs and defending them against their oppressors who come to the community in many forms—from

armed police to capitalist exploiters. We knew that this strategy would raise the consciousness of the people and also give us their support. Then, if we were driven underground by the oppressors, the people would support us and defend us. They would know that, in spite of the oppressor's interpretations, that our only desire was to serve their true interests; and they would defend us. In this manner we might be forced underground, but there would be a lifeline to the community which would always sustain us, because the people would identify with us and not with our common enemy.

For a time the Black Panther Party lost its vision and defected from the community. With the defection of Eldridge Cleaver, however, we can move again to a full-scale development of our original vision and come out of the twilight zone which the Party has been in during the recent past.

The only reason that the Party is still in existence at this time, and the only reason that we have been able to survive the repression of the Party and murders of some of our most advanced comrades is because of the Ten-Point Program—our survival program. Our programs would be meaningless and insignificant if they were not community programs. This is why it is my opinion that as long as the Black community and oppressed people are found in North America the Black Panther Party will last. The Party will survive as a structured vehicle, because it serves the true interests of oppressed people and administers to their needs—this was the original vision of the Party. The original vision was not structured by rhetoric nor by ideology. It was structured by the practical needs of the people, and its dreamers were armed with an ideology which provided a systematic method of analysis of how best to meet those needs.

When Bobby Seale and I came together to launch the Black Panther Party, we had been through many groups. Most of them were so dedicated to rhetoric and artistic rituals that they had withdrawn from living in the Twentieth Century. Sometimes their analyses were beautiful, but they had no practical programs which would deliver their understandings to the people. When they did try to develop practical programs, they often failed, because they lacked a systematic ideology which would help them do concrete analyses of concrete conditions to gain a full understanding of the community and its needs. When I was in Donald Warden's Afro-American Association, I watched him try to make a reality of community control through Black Capitalism. But Warden did not have a systematic ideology, and his attempts to initiate his program continually frustrated him and the community too. They did not know why capitalism would not work for them, even though it had worked for other ethnic groups.

When we formed the Party, we did so because we wanted to put theory and practice together, in a systematic manner. We did this through our basic Ten Point Program. In actuality it was a 20-Point Program, with the practice expressed in "What We Want" and the theory expressed in "What We Believe." This program was designed to serve as a basis for a structured political vehicle.

The actions we engaged in at that time were strictly strategic actions, for political purposes. They were designed to mobilize the community. Any action which does not mobilize the community toward the goal is not a revolutionary action. The action might be a marvelous statement of courage, but if it does not mobilize the people toward the goal of a higher manifestation of freedom, it is not making a political statement and could even be counter-revolutionary.

We realized at a very early point in our development, that revolution is a process. It is not a particular action, nor is it a conclusion. It is a process. This is why when feudalism wiped out slavery, feudalism was revolutionary. This is why when capitalism wiped out feudalism, capitalism was revolutionary. The concrete analysis of concrete conditions will reveal the true nature of the situation and increase our understanding. This process moves in a dialectical manner and we understand the struggle of the opposites based upon their unity.

Many times people say that our Ten-Point Program is reformist; but they ignore the fact that revolution is a process. We left the program open-ended, so that it could develop and people could identify with it. We did not offer it to them as a conclusion; we offered it as a vehicle to move them to a higher level. In their quest for freedom, and in their attempts to prevent the oppressor from stripping them of all the things they need to exist, the people see things as moving from A to B to C; they do not see things as moving from A to Z. In other words they have to see first some basic accomplishments, in order to realize that major successes are possible. Much of the time the revolutionary will have to guide them into this understanding. But he can never take them from A to Z in one jump, because it is too far ahead. Therefore, when the revolutionary begins to indulge in Z, or final conclusions, the people do not relate to him. Therefore he is no longer a revolutionary, if revolution is a process. This makes any action or function which does not promote the process—non-revolutionary.

When the Party went to Sacramento, when the Party faced down the policemen in front of the office of Ramparts magazine, and when the Party patrolled the police with arms, we were acting (in 1966) at a time when the people had given up the philosophy of non-violent direct action and were beginning to deal with sterner stuff. We wanted them to see the virtues of disciplined and organized armed self-defense, rather than spontaneous and disorganized outbreaks and riots. There were Police Alert Patrols all over the country, but we were the first armed police patrol. We called ourselves the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. In all of this we had political and revolutionary objectives in mind, but we knew that we could not succeed without the support of the people.

Our strategy was based on a consistent ideology, which helped us to understand the conditions around us. We knew that the law was not prepared for what we were doing and policemen were so shocked that they didn't know what to do. We saw that the people felt a new pride and strength because of the example we set for them; and they began to look toward the vehicle we were building for answers.

Later we dropped the term "Self-Defense" from our name and just became the Black Panther Party. We discouraged actions like Sacramento and police observations because we recognized that these were not the things to do in every situation or on every occasion. We never called these revolutionary actions. The only time an action is revolutionary is when the people relate to it in a revolutionary way. If they will not use the example you set, then no matter how many guns you have, your action is not revolutionary.

The gun itself is not necessarily revolutionary, because the fascists carry guns—in fact they have more guns. A lot of so-called revolutionaries simply do not understand the statement by Chairman Mao that "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." They thought Chairman Mao said political power is the gun, but the emphasis is on grows. The culmination of political power is the ownership and control of the land and the institutions thereon, so that you can then get rid of the gun. That is why Chairman Mao makes the statement that, "We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun, it is necessary to take up the gun." He is always speaking of getting rid of it. If he did not look at it in those terms, then he surely would not be revolutionary. In other words, the gun by all revolutionary principles is a tool to be used in our strategy; it is not an end in itself. This was a part of the original vision of the Black Panther Party.

I had asked Eldridge Cleaver to join the Party a number of times. But he did not join until after the confrontation with the police in front of the office of Ramparts magazine, where the police were afraid to go for their guns. Without my knowledge, he took this as the Revolution and the Party. But in our basic program it was not until Point 7 that we mentioned the gun, and this was

intentional. We were trying to build a political vehicle through which the people could express their revolutionary desires. We recognized that no party or organization can make the revolution, only the people can. All we could do was act as a guide to the people. Because revolution is a process, and because the process moves in a dialectical manner. At one point one thing might be proper, but the same action could be improper at another point. We always emphasized a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, and then an appropriate response to these conditions as a way of mobilizing the people and leading them to higher levels of consciousness.

People constantly thought that we were security guards and community police or something like this. This is why we dropped the term "Self-Defense" from our name and directed the attention of the people to the fact that the only way they would get salvation is through their control of the institutions which serve the community. This would require that they organize a political vehicle which would keep their support and endorsement through its survival programs of service. They would look to it for answers and guidance. It would not be an organization which runs candidates for political office, but it would serve as a watchman over the administrators whom the people have placed in office.

Because the Black Panther Party grows out of the conditions and needs of oppressed people, we are interested in everything the people are interested in, even though we may not see these particular concerns as the final answers to our problems. We will never run for political office, but we will endorse and support those candidates who are acting in the true interests of the people. We may even provide campaign workers for them and do voter registration and basic precinct work. This would not be out of a commitment to electoral politics, however. It would be our way of bringing the will of the people to bear on situations in which they are interested. We will also hold such candidates responsible to the community, no matter how far removed their offices may be from the community. So we lead the people by following their interests, with a view toward raising their consciousness to see beyond particular goals.

When Eldridge joined the Party it was after the police confrontation, which left him fixated with the "either-or" attitude. This was that either the community picked up the gun with the Party or else they were cowards and there was no place for them. He did not realize that if the people did not relate to the Party, then there was no way that the Black Panther Party could make any revolution, because the record shows that the people are the makers of the revolution and of world history.

Sometimes there are those who express personal problems in political terms, and if they are eloquent, then these personal problems can sound very political. We charge Eldridge Cleaver with this. Much of it is probably beyond his control, because it is so personal. But we did not know that when he joined the Party, he was doing so only because of that act in front of Ramparts. We weren't trying to prove anything to ourselves, all we were trying to do, at that particular point, was defend Betty Shabazz. But we were praised by the people.

Under the influence of Eldridge Cleaver the Party gave the community no alternative for dealing with us, except by picking up the gun. This move was reactionary simply because the community was not at that point. Instead of being a cultural cult group, we became, by that act, a revolutionary cult group. But this is a basic contradiction, because revolution is a process, and if the acts you commit do not fall within the scope of the process then they are non-revolutionary.

What the revolutionary movement and the Black community needs is a very strong structure. This structure can only exist with the support of the people and it can only get its support through serving them. This is why we have the service to the people program—the most important thing in the Party. We will serve their needs, so that they can survive through this oppression. Then when they are ready to pick up the gun, serious business will happen. Eldridge Cleaver influenced us to

isolate ourselves from the Black community, so that it was war between the oppressor and the Black Panther Party, not war between the oppressor and the oppressed community.

The Black Panther Party defected from the community long before Eldridge defected from the Party. Our hook-up with white radicals did not give us access to the white community, because they do not guide the white community. The Black community does not relate to them, so we were left in a twilight zone, where we could not enter the community with any real political education programs; yet we were not doing anything to mobilize whites. We had no influence in raising the consciousness of the Black community and that is the point where we defected.

We went through a free-speech movement in the Party, which was not necessary, and only further isolated us from the Black community. We had all sorts of profanity in our paper and every other word which dropped from our lips was profane. This did not happen before I was jailed, because I would not stand for it. But Eldridge's influence brought this about. I do not blame him altogether; I blame the Party because the Party accepted it.

Eldridge was never fully in the leadership of the Party. Even after Bobby was snatched away from us, I did not place Eldridge in a position of leadership, because he was not interested in that. I made David Hilliard administrator of programs. I knew that Eldridge would not do anything to lift the consciousness of the comrades in the Party. But I knew that he could make a contribution; and I pressed him to do so. I pressed him to write and edit the paper, but he wouldn't do it. The paper did not even come out every week until after Eldridge went to jail. But Eldridge Cleaver did make great contributions to the Black Panther Party with his writing and speaking. We want to keep this in mind, because there is a positive and negative side to everything.

The correct handling of a revolution is not to offer the people an "either-or" ultimatum. We must instead gain the support of the people through serving their needs. Then when the police or any other agency of repression tries to destroy the program, the people will move to a higher level of consciousness and action. Then the organized structure can guide the people to the point where they are prepared to deal in many ways. This was the strategy we used in 1966 when we were related to in a positive way.

So the Black Panther Party has reached a contradiction with Eldridge Cleaver and he has defected from the Party, because we would not order everyone into the streets tomorrow to make a revolution. We recognize that this is impossible because our dialectics or ideology, our concrete analysis of concrete conditions say that it is a fantasy, because the people are not at that point now. This contradiction and conflict may seem unfortunate to some, but it is a part of the dialectical process. The resolution of this contradiction has freed us from incorrect analyses and emphases.

We are now free to move toward the building of a community structure which will become a true voice of the people, promoting their interests in many ways. We can continue to push our basic survival program. We can continue to serve the people as advocates of their true interests. We can truly become a political revolutionary vehicle which will lead the people to a higher level of consciousness, so that they will know what they must really do in their quest for freedom, and they will have the courage to adopt any means necessary to seize the time and obtain that freedom.

10.5 George Jackson, Prison Letters (1970)

April 4, 1970

Dear Fay,

For very obvious reasons it pains me to dwell on the past. As an individual, and as the male of our order I have only the proud flesh of very recent years to hold up as proof that I did not die in the sickbed in which I lay for so long. I've taken my lesson from the past and attempted to close it off.

I've drunk deeply from the cisterns of gall, swam against the current in Blood Alley, Urban Fascist Amerika, experienced the nose rub in shit, armed myself with a monumental hatred and tried to forget and pretend. A standard black male defense mechanism.

It hasn't worked. It may just be me, but I suspect that it's part of the pitiful black condition that the really bad moments record themselves so clearly and permanently in the mind, while the few brief flashes of gratification are lost immediately, nightmare overhanging darkly.

My recall is nearly perfect, time has faded nothing. I recall the very first kidnap. I've lived through the passage, died on the passage, lain in the unmarked, shallow graves of the millions who fertilized the Amerikan soil with their corpses; cotton and corn growing out of my chest, "unto the third and fourth generation," the tenth, the hundredth. My mind ranges back and forth through the uncounted generations, and I feel all that they ever felt, but double. I can't help it; there are too many things to remind me of the $23\frac{1}{2}$ hours that I'm in this cell. Not ten minutes pass without a reminder. In between, I'm left to speculate on what form the reminder will take.

Down here we hear relaxed, matter-of-fact conversations centering around how best to kill all the nation's niggers and in what order. It's not the fact that they consider killing me that upsets. They've been "killing all the niggers" for nearly half a millennium now, but I am still alive. I might be the most resilient dead man in the universe. The upsetting thing is that they never take into consideration the fact that I am going to resist. No they honestly believe that shit. They do! That's what they think of us. That they have beaten and conditioned all the defense and attack reflexes from us. That the region of the mind that stores the principles upon which men base their rationale to resist is missing in us. Don't they talk of concentration camps? Don't they state that it couldn't happen in the U.S. because the fascists here are nice fascists? Not because it's impossible to incarcerate 30 million resisters, but because they are humane imperialists, enlightened fascists.

Well, they've made a terrible mistake. I recall the day I was born, the first day of my generation. It was during the second (and most destructive) capitalist world war for colonial privilege, early on a rainy Wednesday morning, late September, Chicago. It happened to me in a little fold-into-the-wall bed, in a little half-flat on Racine and Lake. Dr. Rogers attended. The el train that rattled by within fifteen feet of our front windows (the only two windows) screamed in at me like the banshee, portentous of pain, death, threatening and imminent. The first motion that my eyes focused on was this pink hand swinging in a wide arc in the general direction of my black ass. I stopped that hand, the left downward block, and countered the right needle finger to the eye. I was born with my defense reflexes well developed.

It's going to be "Kill me if you can," fool, not "Kill me if you please."

But let them make their plans on the supposition, "like slave, like son." I'm not going for it, though, and they've made my defense easier. A cop gives the keys to a group of right-wing cons. They're going to open our cells—one at a time—all over the building. They don't want to escape, or deal with the men who hold them here. They can solve their problems only if they kill all of us—think about that—these guys live a few cells from me. None of them have ever lived, most are state-raised in institutions like this one. They have nothing coming, nothing at all, they have nothing at stake in this order of things. In defending right-wing ideals and the status quo they're saying in effect that ninety-nine years and a dark day in prison is their idea of fun. Most are in and out, and mostly in, all of their life. The periods that they pass on the outside are considered

runs. Simply stated, they consider the periods spent in the joint more natural, more in keeping with their tastes. Well, I understand their condition, and I know how they got that way. I could honestly sympathize with them if they were not so wrong, so stupid as to let the pigs use them. Sounds like Germany of the thirties and forties to me. It's the same on the outside there. I'll venture to say that there's not one piece of stock, not one bond owned by anyone in any of the families of the pigs who murdered Fred Hampton. They organize marches around the country, marches and demonstrations in support of total immediate destruction of Vietnam, and afterward no one is able to pick up the tab. The fascists, it seems, have a standard M.O. for dealing with the lower classes. Actually oppressive power throughout history has used it. They turn a man against himself—think of all the innocent things that make us feel good, but that make some of us also feel guilty. Think of how the people of the lower classes weight themselves against the men who rule. Consider the con going through the courts on a capital offense who supports capital punishment. I swear I heard something just like that today. Look how long Hershey ran Selective Service. Blacks embrace capitalism, the most unnatural and outstanding example of man against himself that history can offer. After the Civil War, the form of slavery changed from chattel to economic slavery, and we were thrown onto the labor market to compete at a disadvantage with poor whites. Ever since that time, our principal enemy must be isolated and identified as capitalism. The slaver was and is the factory owner, the businessman of capitalist Amerika, the man responsible for employment, wages, prices, control of the nation's institutions and culture. It was the capitalist infrastructure of Europe and the U.S. which was responsible for the rape of Africa and Asia. Capitalism murdered those 30 million in the Congo. Believe me, the European and Anglo-American capitalist would never have wasted the ball and powder were it not for the profit principle. The men, all the men who went into Africa and Asia, the fleas who climbed on that elephant's back with rape on their minds, richly deserve all that they are called. Every one of them deserved to die for their crimes. So do the ones who are still in Vietnam, Angola, Union of South Africa (U.S.A.!). But we must not allow the emotional aspects of these issues, the scum at the surface, to obstruct our view of the big picture, the whole rotten hunk. It was capitalism that armed the ships, free enterprise that launched them, private ownership of property that fed the troops. Imperialism took up where the slave trade left off. It wasn't until after the slave trade ended that Amerika, England, France, and the Netherlands invaded and settled in on Afro-Asian soil in earnest. As the European industrial revolution took hold, new economic attractions replaced the older ones; chattel slavery was replaced by neoslavery. Capitalism, "free" enterprise, private ownership of public property armed and launched the ships and fed the troops; it should be clear that it was the profit motive that kept them there.

It was the profit motive that built the tenement house and the city project. Profit and loss prevents repairs and maintainance. Free enterprise brought the monopolistic chain store into the neighborhood. The concept of private ownership of facilities that the people need to exist brought the legions of hip-shooting, brainless pigs down upon our heads, our homes, our streets. They're there to protect the entrepreneur! His chain store, and his property that you are renting, his bank.

If the entrepreneur decides that he no longer wants to sell you food, let's say, because the Yankee dollar that we value so dearly has suddenly lost its last thirty cents of purchasing power, private ownership means that the only way many of the people will eat is to break the law. Fat Rat Daley has ordered all looters shot.

Black capitalism, black against itself. The silliest contradiction in a long train of spineless, mindless contradictions. Another painless, ultimate remedy: be a better fascist than the fascist. Bill Cosby, acting out the establishment agent—what message was this soul brother conveying to our children? I Spy was certainly programmed to a child's mentality. This running dog in the

company of a fascist with a cause, a flunky's flunky, was transmitting the credo of the slave to our youth, the mod version of the old house nigger. We can never learn to trust as long as we have them. They are as much a part of the repression, more even than the real live, rat-informer-pig. Aren't they telling our kids that it is romantic to be a running dog? The kids are so hungry to see the black male do some shooting and throw some hands that they can't help themselves from identifying with the quislings. So first they turn us against ourselves, precluding all possibility of trust, then fascism takes any latent divisible forces and develops them into divisions in fact: racism, nationalism, religions.

You have Spic, Dago, Jew, Jap, Chink, Gook, Pineapple, and the omnibus nigger to represent the nations of Africa. The point being that it is easier to persuade that little man who joined the army to see the world and who has never murdered before to murder a Gook. Well, it's not quite like murdering a man. Polack, Frog, Kraut, etc.

The wheels just fell off altogether in the thirties. People in certain circles like to forget it, and any reference to the period draws from these circles such defensive epithets as "old-fashioned," "simple old-style socialism," and "out of date." But fashion doesn't concern me, I'm after the facts. The facts are that no one, absolutely no one in the Western world, and very few anywhere else (this includes even those who may have been born yesterday), is unaffected by those years when capitalism's roulette wheel locked in depression. It affected every nation-state on earth. Of course Russia had no stock market and consequently no business cycle, but it was affected by the war that grew out of the efforts to restart the machines and by the effect it had on other nations with which Russia has had to deal. Relativism enters. Since international capitalism was at the time in its outward peak of expansion, there were no African, Asian, or Latin lands organized along nation-state lines that were not adversely affected. Every society in the world that lived by a money economy was part of the depression. Although Russia had abandoned the forms and vacillations of capitalism, it too was damaged due to the principles of relativism.

If there is any question whether those years have any effect on, or relevance to now, just consider the effect on today's mentality. Had the world's people been struck with hereditary cretinism all at once, instead of Adam Smith's "invisible hand," the analogy couldn't be more perfect. I mean cretinism in its literal, medical sense: a congenital deficiency in the secretions of the thyroid gland resulting in deformity and idiocy. Causation links that depression with World War II. The rise to power of Europe's Nazis can be attributed to the depression. The WASP fascists of Amerika secretly desired a war with Japan to stimulate demand and control unemployment. The syllogism is perfect.

So question and analyze the state of being of Europe's Jews who survive. Do the same with the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But we don't have to isolate groups. Causation and relativism link everyone inescapably with the past. None of the righteous people would even be alive had their parents died of the underconsumption of that period or the desperate fascist chicanery aimed at diverting the lower classes from the economic reality of class struggle. The Nazis actually succeeded in foisting upon the lower-class Germans and some of the other European national groups the notion that their economic plight was due not to bad economic principles but caused by the existence of Jews within the system and the shortage of markets (colonies). The obvious intent being to put lower-class, depressed German against lower-class Jew, instead of exploited lower-class German against privileged upper-class German.

The Amerikan fascist used a thousand similar devices, delaying maneuvers, to prevent the people from questioning the validity of the principles upon which capitalism is founded, to turn the people against themselves, people against people, people against other groups of people. Always they will promote competition (while they cooperate), division, mistrust, a sense of isolation. The antipodes

of love. The M.O. of the fascist arrangement is always to protect the capitalist class by destroying the consciousness, the trust, the unity of the lower classes. My father is in his forties today; thirty-five years ago he was living through his most formative years. He was a child of the Great Depression. I want you to notice for later reference that I emphasize and differentiate Great Depression. There were many more international, national, and regional depressions during the period in history relevant to this comment.

There are millions of blacks of my father's generation now living. They are all products of a totally depressed environment. All of the males have lived all of their lives in a terrible quandary; none were able to grasp that a morbid economic deprivation, an outrageous and enormous abrasion, formed the basis of their character.

My father developed his character, convention, convictions, his traits, his life style, out of a situation that began with his mother running out. She left him and his oldest brother on the corner of one of the canyons in East St. Louis. They raised themselves, in the streets, then on a farm somewhere in Louisiana, then in CCC camps. This brother, my father, had no formal education at all. He taught himself the essentials later on. Alone, in the most hostile jungle on earth, ruled over by the king of beasts in the first throes of a bloody and protracted death. Alone, in the most savage moment of history, without arms, and burdened by a black face that he's been hiding ever since.

I love this brother, my father, and when I use the word "love" I am not making an attempt at rhetoric. I am attempting to express a refulgent, unrestrained emanation from the deepest, most durable region of my soul, an unshakable thing that I have never questioned. But no one can come through his ordeal without suffering the penalty of psychosis. It was the price of survival. I would venture that there are no healthy brothers of his generation, none at all.

The brother has reached the prime of his life without ever showing in my presence or anywhere, to my knowledge, an overt manifestation of real sensitivity, affection, or sentiment. He has lived his entire life in a state of shock. Nothing can touch him now, his calm is complete, his immunity to pain is total. When I can fix his eyes, which is not often since when they aren't closed they are shaded, I see staring back at me the expressionless mask of the zombie.

But he must have loved us, of this I am certain. Part of the credo of the neoslave, the latter-day slave, who is free to move from place to place if he can come by the means, is to shuffle away from any situation that becomes too difficult. He stayed with us, worked sixteen hours a day, after which he would eat, bathe and sleep—period. He never owned more than two pairs of shoes in his life and in the time I was living with him never more than one suit, never took a drink, never went to a nightclub, expressed no feelings about such things, and never once reminded any one of us, or so it seemed, never expected any notice of the fact that he was giving to us all of the life force and activity that the monster-machine had left to him. The part that the machine seized, that death of the spirit visited upon him by a world that he never influenced, was mourned by us, and most certainly by me, but no one ever made a real effort to give him solace. How do you console a man who is unapproachable?

He came to visit me when I was in San Quentin. He was in his forties then too, an age in men when they have grown full. I had decided to reach for my father, to force him with my revolutionary dialectic to question some of the mental barricades he'd thrown up to protect his body from what to him was an undefinable and omnipresent enemy. An enemy that would starve his body, expose it to the elements, chain his body, jail it, club it, rip it, hang it, electrify it, and poison-gas it. I would have him understand that although he had saved his body he had done so at a terrible cost to his mind. I felt that if I could superimpose the explosive doctrine of self-determination through people's government and revolutionary culture upon what remained of his mind, draw him

out into the real world, isolate and identify his real enemies, if I could hurl him through Fanon's revolutionary catharsis, I would be serving him, the people, the historical obligation.

San Quentin was in the riot season. It was early January 1967. The pigs had for the last three months been on a search-and-destroy foray into our cells. All times of the day or night our cells were being invaded by the goon squad: you wake up, take your licks, get skin-searched, and wait on the tier naked while they mangled your few personal effects. This treatment, fear therapy, was not accorded to all however. Some Chicanos behind dope, some whites behind extortionate activities were exempted. Mostly, it came down on us. Rehabilitational terror. Each new pig must go through a period of in-service training where he learns the Gestapo arts, the full range of anti-body tactics that he will be expected to use on the job. Part of this in-service training is a crash course in close-order combat where the pigs are taught how to use club and sap, and how to form and use the simpler karate hands, where to hit a man with these hands for the best (or worst) effect.

The new pigs usually have to serve a period on the goon squad before they fall into their regular role on the animal farm. They are always anxious to try their new skills—"to see if it really works"—we were always forced to do something to slow them down, to demonstrate that violence was a two-edged sword. This must be done at least once every year, or we would all be as punchy and fractured as a Thai Boxer before our time was up. The brothers wanted to protest. The usual protest was a strike, a work stoppage, closing the sweatshops where industrial products are worked up for two cents an hour. (Some people get four cents after they've been on the job for six months.) The outside interests who made the profits didn't dig strikes. That meant the captain didn't like them either since it meant pressure on him from these free-enterprising political connections.

January in San Quentin is the worst way to be. It's cold when you don't have proper clothing, it's wet, dreary. The drab green, barred, buttressed walls that close in the upper yard are sixty to seventy feet high. They make you feel that your condition may be permanent.

On the occasion I wish to relate, my father had driven all night from Los Angeles alone; he had not slept more than a couple of hours in the last forty-eight.

We shook hands and the dialectic began. He listened while I scorned the diabolical dog—capitalism. Didn't it raise pigs and murder Vietnamese? Didn't it glut some and starve most of us? Didn't it build housing projects that resemble prisons and luxury hotels and apartments that resemble the Hanging Gardens on the same street? Didn't it build a hospital and then a bomb? Didn't it erect a school and then open a whorehouse? Build an airplane to sell a tranquilizer tablet? For every church didn't it construct a prison? For each new medical discovery didn't it produce as a by-product ten new biological warfare agents? Didn't it aggrandize men like Hunt and Hughes and dwarf him?

He said, "Yes, but what can we do? There's too many of the bastards." His eyes shaded over and his mind went into a total regression, a relapse back through time, space, pain, neglect, a thousand dreams deferred, broken promises, forgotten ambitions, back through the hundreds of renewed hopes shattered to a time when he was young, roaming the Louisiana countryside for something to eat. He talked for ten minutes of things that were not in the present, people that I didn't know. "We'll have to take something back to Aunt Bell." He talked of places that we had never seen together. He called me by his brother's name twice. I was so shocked I could only sit and blink. This was the guy who took nothing seriously, the level-headed, practical Negro, the work-a-day, never-complain, cool, smooth colored gentleman. They have driven him to the abyss of madness; just behind the white veneer waits the awesome, vindictive black madness. There are a lot of blacks living in his generation, the one of the Great Depression, when it was no longer possible to maintain the black self by serving. Even that had dried up. Blacks were beaten and killed for

jobs like porter, bellboy, stoker, pearl diver, and bootblack. My clenched fist goes up for them; I forgive them, I understand, and if they will stop their collaboration with the fascist enemy, stop it now, and support our revolution with just a nod, we'll forget and forgive them for casting us naked into a grim and deleterious world.

The black colonies of Amerika have been locked in depression since the close of the Civil War. We have lived under regional depression since the end of chattel slavery. The beginning of the new slavery was marked by massive unemployment and underemployment. That remains with us still. The Civil War destroyed the landed aristocracy. The dictatorship of the agrarian class was displaced by the dictatorship of the manufacturing-capitalist class. The neoslaver destroyed the uneconomic plantation, and built upon its ruins a factory and a thousand subsidiaries to serve the factory setup. Since we had no skills, outside of the farming techniques that had proved uneconomic, the subsidiary service trades and menial occupations fell to us. It is still so today. We are a subsidiary subculture, a depressed area within the parent monstrosity. The other four stages of the capitalist business cycle are: recovery, expansion, inflation, and recession. Have we ever gone through a recovery or expansion stage? We are affected adversely by inflationary trends within the larger economy. Who suffers most when the prices of basic, necessary commodities go up? When the parent economy dips into inflation and recession we dip into subdepression. When it goes into depression, we go into total desperation. The difference between what my father's generation went through during the Great Depression and what we are going through now is simply a matter of degree. We can sometimes find a service to perform across the tracks. They couldn't. We can go home to Mama for a meal when things get really tight. They couldn't. There's welfare and housework for Mama now. Then there was no such thing as welfare.

Depression is an economic condition. It is a part of the capitalist business cycle, a necessary concomitant of capitalism. Its colonies—secondary markets—will always be depressed areas, because the steadily decreasing labor force, decreasing and growing more skilled under the advances of automation, casts the unskilled colonial subject into economic roles that preclude economic mobility. Learning the new skills even if we were allowed wouldn't help. It wouldn't help the masses even if they learned them. It wouldn't help because there is a fixed ceiling on the labor force. This ceiling gets lower with every advance in the arts of production. Learning the newer skills would merely put us into a competition with established labor that we could not win. One that we don't want. There are absolutely no vacuums for us to fill in the business world. We don't want to capitalize on people anyway. Capitalism is the enemy. It must be destroyed. There is no other recourse. The System is not workable in view of the modern industrial city-based society. Men are born disenfranchised. The contract between ruler and ruled perpetuates this disenfranchisement.

Men in positions of trust owe an equitable distribution of wealth and privilege to the men who have trusted them. Each individual born in these Amerikan cities should be born with those things that are necessary to survival. Meaningful social roles, education, medical care, food, shelter, and understanding should be guaranteed at birth. They have been part of all civilized human societies—until this one. Why else do men allow other men to govern? To what purpose is a Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, or of Housing and Urban Development, etc? Why do we give these men power over us. Why do we give them taxes? For nothing? So they can say that the world owes our children nothing? This world owes each of us a living the very day we are born. If not we can make no claims to civilization and we can stop recognizing the power of any administrator. Evolution of the huge modern city-based society has made our dependence upon government complete. Individually, we cannot feed ourselves and our children. We cannot, by ourselves, train and educate them at home. We cannot organize our own work inside the city structure by ourselves. Consequently, we must

allow men to specialize in coordinating these activities. We pay them, honor them, and surrender control of certain aspects of our lives to them so that they will in return take each new, helpless entry into the social group and work on him until he is no longer helpless, until he can start to support himself and make his contribution to the continuity of the society.

If a man is born into Amerikan society with nothing coming, if the capitalist creed that runs “The world doesn’t owe you a living” is true, then the thing that my father’s mother did is not outrageous at all. If it is true that government shouldn’t organize then the fact that my father had no place to seek help until he could help himself has little consequence. But it would also mean that we are all in the grip of some monstrous contradiction. And that we have no more claim to civilization than a pack of baboons.

What is it then that really destroyed my father’s comfort, that doomed his entire generation to a life without content? What is it that has been working against my generation from the day we were born through every day to this one?

Capitalism and capitalist man, wrecker of worlds, scourge of the people. It cannot address itself to our needs, it cannot and will not change itself to adapt to natural changes within the social structure.

To the black male the losses were most tragic of all. It will do us no good to linger over the fatalities, they’re numberless and beyond our reach. But we who have survived must eventually look at ourselves and wonder why. The competition at the bottom of the social spectrum is for symbols, honors, and objects; black against itself, black against lower-class whites and browns, virulent, cutthroat, back-stabbing competition, the Amerikan way of life. But the fascists cooperate. The four estates of power form a morbid lone quadrangle. This competition has destroyed trust. Among the black males a premium has been placed on distrust. Every other black male is viewed as the competition; the wise and practical black is the one who cares nothing for any living ass, the cynic who has gotten over any principles he may have picked up by mistake. We can’t express love on the supposition that the recipient will automatically use it against us as a weapon. We’re going to have to start all over again. This next time around we’ll let it all hang out, we’ll stop betraying ourselves, and we’ll add some trust and love.

I do not include those who support capitalism in any appreciable degree or who feel they have something to lose with its destruction. They are our irreconcilable enemy. We can never again trust people like Cosby, Gloves Davis, 21 or the old Negro bus driver who testified in the Huey Newton trial. Any man who stands up to speak in defense of capitalism must be slapped down.

Right now our disease must be identified as capitalist man and his monstrous machine, a machine with the senseless and calloused ability to inflict these wounds programmed into its every cycle.

I was born with terminal cancer, a suppurating, malignant sore that attacked me in the region just behind the eyes and moves outward to destroy my peace.

It has robbed me of these twenty-eight years. It has robbed us all for nearly half a millennium. The greatest bandit of all time, we’ll stop him now.

Recall the stories you’ve read about the other herd animals, the great Amerikan bison, the caribou or Amerikan reindeer.

The great Ameikan bison or buffalo—he’s a herd animal, or social animal if you prefer, just like us in that. We’re social animals, we need others of our general kind about us to feel secure. Few men would enjoy total isolation. To be alone constantly is torture to normal men. The buffalo, cattle, caribou, and some others are like folks in that they need company most of the time. They need to butt shoulders and butt butts. They like to rub noses. We shake hands, slap backs, and rub lips. Of all the world’s people we blacks love the company of others most, we are the most socialistic.

Social animals eat, sleep, and travel in company, they need this company to feel secure. This fact means that socialistic animals also need leaders. It follows logically that if the buffalo is going to eat, sleep, and travel in groups some coordinating factor is needed or some will be sleeping when others are traveling. Without the leader-follower complex, in a crisis the company would roar off in a hundred different directions. But the buffalo did evolve the leader-follower complex as did the other social animals; if the leader of a herd of caribou loses his footing and slips to his death from some high place, it is very likely that the whole herd will die behind. The leader-follower complex. The hunter understood this. Predatory man learned of the natural occurrence of leadership in all of the social animals; that each group will by nature produce a leader, and to these natural leaders fall the responsibility for coordination of the group's activity, organizing them for survival. The buffalo hunter knew that if he could isolate and identify the leader of the herd and kill him first, the rest of the herd would be helpless, at his mercy, to be killed off as he saw fit.

We blacks have the same problem the buffalo had; we have the same weakness also, and predatory man understands this weakness well.

Huey Newton, Ahmed Evans, Bobby Seale, and the hundreds of others will be murdered according to the fascist scheme.

A sort of schematic natural selection in reverse: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Bobby Hutton, Brother Booker, W. L. Noland, M. L. King, Featherstone, Mark Clark, and Fred Hampton—just a few who have already gone the way of the buffalo.

The effect these moves from the right have had on us is a classic textbook exercise in fascist political economy. At the instant a black head rises out of our crisis existence, it's lopped off and hung from the highest courthouse or newspaper firm. Our predetermined response is a schizophrenic indifference, withdrawal, and an appreciation of things that do not exist. "Oh happy days. Oh happy days. Oh happy days." Self-hypnotically induced hallucinations.

The potential black leadership looks at the pitiable condition of the black herd: the corruption, the preoccupation with irrelevance, the apparent ineptitude concerning matters of survival. He knows that were he to give the average brother an M-16, this brother wouldn't have anything but a club for a week. He weighs this thing that he sees in the herd against the possible risks he'll be taking at the hands of the fascist monster and he naturally decides to go for himself, feeling that he can't help us because we are beyond help, that he may as well get something out of existence. These are the "successful Negroes," the opposite of the "failures." You find them on the ball courts and fields, the stage, pretending and playing children's games. And looking for all the world just as pitiable as the so-called failures.

We were colonized by the white predatory fascist economy. It was from them that we evolved our freak subculture, and the attitudes that perpetuate our conditions. These attitudes cause us to give each other up to the Klan pigs. We even on occasion work gun in hand right with them. A black killed Fred Hampton; blacks working with the CIA killed Malcolm X; blacks are plentiful on the payroll of the many police forces that fascism must employ to protect itself from the people. These fascist subcultural attitudes have sent us to Europe, Asia (one-fourth of the fatalities in Vietnam are black fatalities), and even Africa (the Congo during the Simba attempt to establish people's government) to die for nothing. In the recent cases of Africa and Asia we have allowed the neoslaver to use us to help enslave people we love. We are so confused, so foolishly simple that we not only fail to distinguish what is generally right and what is wrong, but we also fail to appreciate what is good and not good for us in very personal matters concerning the black colony and its liberation. The ominous government economic agency whose only clear motive is to further enslave, number, and spy on us, the black agency subsidized by the government to infiltrate us and retard liberation,

is accepted, and by some, even invited and welcomed, while the Black Panther is avoided and hard-pressed to find protection among the people. The Black Panther is our brother and son, the one who wasn't afraid. He wasn't so lazy as the rest, or so narrow and restricted in his vision. If we allow the fascist machine to destroy these brothers, our dream of eventual self-determination and control over the factors surrounding our survival is going to die with them, and the generations to come will curse and condemn us for irresponsible cowardice. I have a young courageous brother whom I love more than I love myself, but I have given him up to the revolution. I accept the possibility of his eventual death as I accept the possibility of my own. Some moment of weakness, a slip, a mistake, since we are the men who can make none, will bring the blow that kills. I accept this as a necessary part of our life. I don't want to raise any more black slaves. We have a determined enemy who will accept us only on a master-slave basis. When I revolt, slavery dies with me. I refuse to pass it down again. The terms of my existence are founded on that.

Black Mama, you're going to have to stop making cowards: "Be a good boy"; "You're going to worry me to death, boy"; "Don't trust those niggers"; "Stop letting those bad niggers lead you around, boy"; "Make you a dollar, boy." Black Mama, your overriding concern with the survival of our sons is mistaken if it is survival at the cost of their manhood.

The young Panther party member, our vanguard, must be embraced, protected, allowed to develop. We must learn from him and teach him; he'll be full grown soon, a son and brother of whom we can be proud. If he sags we'll brace him up, when he takes a step we'll step with him, our dialectic, our communion in perfect harmony, and there'll never, never be another Fred Hampton affair.

Power to the people.

April 17, 1970

Dear Fay,

Slavery is an economic condition. Today's neoslavery must be defined in terms of economics. The chattel is a property, one man exercising the property rights of his established economic order, the other man as that property. The owner can move that property or hold it in one square yard of the earth's surface; he can let it breed other slaves, or make it breed other slaves; he can sell it, beat it, work it, maim it, fuck it, kill it. But if he wants to keep it and enjoy all of the benefits that property of this kind can render, he must feed it sometimes, he must clothe it against the elements, he must provide a modicum of shelter. Chattel slavery is an economic condition which manifests itself in the total loss or absence of self-determination.

The new slavery, the modern variety of chattel slavery updated to disguise itself, places the victim in a factory or in the case of most blacks in support roles inside and around the factory system (service trades), working for a wage. However, if work cannot be found in or around the factory complex, today's neoslavery does not allow even for a modicum of food and shelter. You are free—to starve. The sense and meaning of slavery comes through as a result of our ties to the wage. You must have it, without it you would starve or expose yourself to the elements. One's entire day centers around the acquisition of the wage. The control of your eight or ten hours on the job is determined by others. You are left with fourteen to sixteen hours. But since you don't live at the factory you have to subtract at least another hour for transportation. Then you are left with thirteen to fifteen hours to yourself. If you can afford three meals you are left with ten to twelve hours. Rest is also a factor in efficiency so we have to take eight hours away for sleeping, leaving two to four hours. But—one must bathe, comb, clean teeth, shave, dress—there is no point

in protracting this. I think it should be generally accepted that if a man (or woman) works for a wage at a job that he doesn't enjoy, and I am convinced that no one could enjoy any type of assembly-line work, or plumbing or hod carrying, or any job in the service trades, then he qualifies for this definition of neoslave. The man who owns the factory or shop or business runs your life; you are dependent on this owner. He organizes your work, the work upon which your whole life source and style depends. He indirectly determines your whole day, in organizing you for work. If you don't make any more in wages than you need to live, you are a neoslave. You qualify if you cannot afford to leave California for New York. If you cannot visit Zanzibar, Havana, Peking, or even Paris when you get the urge, you are a slave. If you're held in one spot on this earth because of your economic status, it is just the same as being held in one spot because you are the owner's property. Here in the black colony the pigs still beat and maim us. They murder us and call it justifiable homicide. A brother who had a smoking pipe in his belt was shot in the back of the head. Neoslavery is an economic condition, a small knot of men exercising the property rights of their established economic order, organizing and controlling the life style of the slave as if he were in fact property. Succinctly: an economic condition which manifests itself in the total loss or absence of self-determination. Only after this is understood and accepted can we go on to the dialectic that will help us in a remedy.

A diagnosis of our discomfort is necessary before the surgery; it's always necessary to justify the letting of blood. And we don't want the knife to damage any related parts that could be spared for later use.

The pig is an instrument of neoslavery, to be hated and avoided; he is pushed to the front by the men who exercise the unnatural right over property. You've heard the patronizing shit about the thin blue line that protects property and the owners of property. The pigs are not protecting you, your home, and its contents. Recall they never found the TV set you lost in that burglary. They're protecting the unnatural right of a few men to own the means of all of our subsistence. The pig is protecting the right of a few private individuals to own public property! The pig is merely the gun, the tool, a mentally inanimate utensil. It is necessary to destroy the gun, but destroying the gun and sparing the hand that holds it will forever relegate us to a defensive action, hold our revolution in the doldrums, ultimately defeat us. The animal that holds the gun, that has loosed the pig of war on us, is a bitter-ender, an intractable, gluttonous vulture who must eat at our hearts to live. Midas-motivated, never satisfied, everything he touches will turn into shit! Slaying the shitty pig will have absolutely no healing effect at all, if we leave this vulture to touch someone else. Spare the hand that holds the gun and it will simply fashion another. The Viet soldier has attacked and destroyed the pigs and their guns, but this alone has not solved his problems. If the Cong could get to the factories and the people who own and organize them, the war would end in a few months. All wars would end. The pigs who have descended upon the Vietnamese colony are the same who have come down on us. They come in all colors, though they are mainly white. Culturally (or anticulturally), they have the same background and the same mentality. They have the same intent: to preserve the economically depressed areas of the world as secondary markets and sources of cheap raw materials for the Amerikan fascist. The black colonies inside the Amerikan fascist state are secondary markets and sources of cheap raw materials. In our case this cheap raw material is our bodies, giving all of the benefits that property of this kind can render. How much more in wages would they have to pay a white, unionized garbage collector? And black mama tricks for ten-and-two?

Right behind the expeditionary forces (the pigs) come the missionaries, and the colonial effect is complete. The missionaries, with the benefits of christendom, school us on the value of symbolism, dead presidents, and the rediscount rate. The black colony lost its conscience to these missionaries.

Their schools, their churches, their newspapers and other periodicals destroyed the black conscience and made it almost impossible for us to determine our own best interest.

The cultural links to the established capitalist society have been a lot closer than we like to admit. In the area of culture (I am using this word in the narrow sense out of necessity), we are bonded to the fascist society by chains that have strangled our intellect, scrambled our wits, and sent us stumbling backward in a wild, disorganized retreat from reality. We don't want their culture. We don't want a piece of that pie. It's rotten, putrid, repulsive to all the senses. Why are we rushing to board a sinking ship? When we join hands with the established fascist scum in any way, it gives the people of the world, the righteous people of the Congo, Tanzania, Sudan, of Cuba, China, Vietnam, etc., the legitimate right to hate us too.

The Swedish people and their government hate the Amerikan fascist (as almost every civilized state must). They show their loathing every chance they get. The Amerikan government dresses some black clown in a stovepipe hat and sends him over as an ambassador. This black cat isn't representing the black colony. He's representing the pigs. The Swedes throw bricks at him and call for the "nigger" to go home.

Chances are that the old slave they sent to Sweden never spent a night in the ghetto but still he represents the black oppressed. So when the slave turns up in his tails and stovepipe lid, a distorted imitation of the genuine fool (tomfool?), the hatred felt so deeply for the Amerikan fascist state by the Swedes is transferred onto us!

The government buys and trains these running dogs very carefully, and sends them scrambling, tails and all, outward to represent the establishment. Whole kennels are sent to the African nations on the ambassadorial level (and lower, of course) on the supposition that the people of these nations will be able to relate better to a black face. The leaders of these nations, if they can be counted among the righteous, are never impressed, but this sort of thing affects the African masses deeply. Several years ago, in one of the central African states, a gathering of the people marched against the local representatives of the Amerikan government, the USIA, over an issue that won't come to mind now (there have been so many)—but they were resentful enough to carry their protest demonstration to violent extremes. They threw bricks and fire and called for the slavers' blood. They tore down the Yankee rag and danced on it, spit on it, and were about to burn it. They would have burned it and gone on to sack and burn the fascist propaganda center, but the running dog, the tomfool, stopped them, harangued them in the voice of the ventriloquist, and ran Old Glory back to its familiar station—obstructing the sun. They should have hung that nigger from the flagpole by the fat part of his neck, for that black ventriloquist threw up one more barrier to the communion that we must establish with the other oppressed peoples of the world.

They send us to school to learn how to be so disgusting. We send our children to places of learning operated by men who hate us and hate the truth. It is clear that no school would be better. Burn it; all the fascist literature, burn that too. Then equip yourself with the Little Red Book. There is no other way to regain our senses. We must destroy Johnson Publications and the little black tabloids that mimic the fascist press even to their denunciations of black extremists. Burn them or take them over as people's collectives, and give the colonies a dynamite case of self-determination, anticolonialism, and Mao think!

I attended my last year of high school at Bayview High - that's in San Quentin where I did seven years of the last ten that I have spent in jail. The schools in the joint are no different than those out there in the colony at large, with the exception that they are not coeducational. We use the same fascist textbooks that contain the same undercurrent of racism and overtones of nationalism. The missionaries themselves are the same.

At the time, my eventual release on parole was conditional to my finishing high school, and of course being a good boy, never showing any anger, or displeasure, or individuality. I was trying to fake it. I would never have been in the mission school otherwise. I was working in the daytime and attended school evenings.

The biology wasn't too bad. The instructor seldom ventured an opinion outside the subjects related to science, but he was exceptional. I attribute this to the fact that he was somewhat younger than the other pundits. Each of them had a fixed opinion on every material and metaphysical feature of the universe. Colonel Davis in history was outstanding for two very typical characteristics of his profession, temperament and foolishness. True to his persuasion, this jackass was so patriotic and Republican that he actually proposed we begin and end each class with a pledge of allegiance to the flag from a kneeling position. He was tall and square and gray-blond, a veteran of several declared and undeclared Yankee wars. If you passed the flag without a genuflection you had this fool to fight. I sat through his shit for a month; Amerika the beautiful, the righteous, the only nation on earth where everyone can afford a flush toilet and a traffic ticket. All Russians were fat Tartars, the Japanese were copyists, Arabs couldn't fight and neither could the French. All Africans were primitives who didn't know when they were well off. Vietnamese were just niggers with slant eyes (there were four blacks in the class). The Chinese were so stupid that they couldn't feed themselves. Inevitably they would have to return to the good old days and ways of the rickshaw, pigtail, the coolie, opium dens, and cathouses. I took this shit with a stony calm for one month. I tried to get out of the class five or six times, but you have to have a clear life-and-death situation to get out of anything once you get in. This is in keeping with the overall prison conspiracy, i.e., you have no will, you have no choice or control, so be wise—surrender. There's this sign hanging everywhere your eyes may happen to rest, begging: "O lord, help me to accept those things I cannot change." A life-death situation is necessary to get out; that's just what I had but I couldn't admit to it—looks bad on the parole board report. I tried to keep a head between myself and this representative of the great silent majority, failing this I would fix my eyes on one of the six flags in the room (one in each corner, two on the desk) and try to endure. Me and this cat fell all the way out in the end. I never planned it that way, in fact my plan was to hide my "face" and hang on. The session we had was completely spontaneous, it started in the opening minutes of our two-hour class. This silent majority had just completed a hymn to the great Amerikan corporate monster with the line "Now haven't we all the right to be proud?" I said, "No." The guy glanced at me, blinked, looked away, and kept right on with his eulogy. My answer didn't register with him; he heard me but he was positive that he heard me wrong. In the cloister of this man's mind, my displeasure, my dissatisfaction was just too impossible to be true. The good colonel had been explaining that corporate capitalism, the end result of a long evolutionary chain of other economic arrangements, was as perfect and flawless a system as man can ever hope to achieve. It was the only economic order that allowed for man's natural inclinations. The barbarous nations of Asia and Africa who had abandoned it for planned economics would ultimately fail since the incentive motive inherent within the capitalist ideal was missing. Without the profit-and-loss incentive, production will remain low and eventually fail. I stood up, sat on the back of my desk, put one foot on the seat, and told this cat that he had just told "another" lie. I don't know why I was doing this. I even felt a thrill of sympathy for the fool at first. His mouth dropped open like a shark's, his ears and forehead and nose showed that he was as red-blooded an Amerikan as anyone could ever become. In an unconscious impulse his hands locked themselves around the base of the two flagpoles on his desk, as if to protect the little pieces of colored rag from the impudent and unpatriotic nigger who did-just-blaspheme!

"What'd you say, boy?" I said, "You've been lying for a month now about 'work ethics' and

‘voting processes’ and ‘economic incentives,’ you’ve been lying all your life really, and now I want to question some of this stuff. Can you stand it?”

I didn’t wait for an answer, but continued, “I’ve worked in factories here in this country, on assembly lines, doing production work. I’ve made some study of mass production procedures in heavy and light industry, and I’ve looked into political economy in general, and I’m certain that in everything you’ve said in here for the last month there was a conscious intent to misrepresent the truth, to present only those parts of the truth that supported your contentions or to omit it altogether. This thing about incentive, if it’s a factor in production, in order for it to influence the volume of production, or the quality, it’s pretty clear that this incentive must find some way of communicating itself down to the worker. I can understand an owner or executive having the desire to make money—profit—but since ambition is a very personal thing, how does it affect the attitude and productivity of the worker? His wage will be the same if he works hard, not so hard, or not hard at all, and it is ultimately on how hard the worker works that volume and quality depends.”

He leaned back in his chair, ran his hands through his hair, palpitated about the nose and upper lip, looked at his flag, and then at me, and answered, “Yes, well, in our factory setups we have quotas to meet and foremen and efficiency experts to see that they are met.”

“You did say quotas? That sounds like something from one of Fidel’s public addresses—you know, sugar quotas—the difference of course being that Fidel is depending on a cooperation that springs from a sense of participation, and perhaps the knowledge that the volume and quality of production determines their general well-being, rather than the personal fortunes of an owner or small group of owners. In the factories that I worked in and have observed the principal interest of most of the workers was coffee and lunch breaks or quitting time; we watched the clock, watched out for the foreman and other spies, and made as many trips to the toilet as we could possibly expect to get away with. Although the profit motive may excite owner and supervisor to invest and organize for production, the index of productivity is determined by the attitudes of the worker in a plant that is not totally automated and even then it would depend on the workers in the machine, tool, and maintenance sectors to a great extent. This being the case, it is the diametrical opposite of your contention that is true. There is less real incentive. Based on the impulse to gain benefits, inherent within the modern form of capitalism, it’s clear to me that the worker who felt that the machine, the factory, all factories were in part his own would be very much concerned about productivity and quality of product, much more concerned than one who has no more at stake than an inadequate wage.”

“But you missed the meaning of my statement.” This is him talking now. “The spur of profit and the fear of loss are the motivations that have made the capitalist system of production efficient. It automatically checks the marginal facilities and factors of production. It is responsive to demand and supply, i.e., the demands of the consumers and the availability of materials, and this responsiveness is automatic, built in, an inherent part of the system.”

I replied that “the same can be said for any system of political economy. With planned, people’s economics, however, the automatic feature is dropped and demand is not stimulated artificially in the Madison Avenue sense. It’s fatuous and misleading to claim profit-and-loss motivation a feature of capitalism only. It is a feature of all economies in all time past and present. The only difference is that with capitalism the spur is driven into the flanks of the people by a relatively few individuals who by chance or bent of ferocity have been able to make fraudulent claims on the rights to profit, the rights to benefit from wealth created by labor first, applied to materials from man’s (plural possessive) source of life support—nature. In the People’s Republics of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe this right to profit—to benefit from their labor and their land—is being returned to the

people. The people are spurred by the profit motive collectively; a situation far more conducive to productivity since ultimately productivity depends on the attitude of the individual worker. Proportionally China has achieved more economically in twenty years than the U.S. has in two hundred. They had the advantage of being able to avoid the terrible mistakes made by the U.S. and Western Europe in those two hundred years, but a comparison between today's China and let's say today's India and Indonesia, where they have developed nothing economically, will point up clearly which system is best oriented to meet the needs of the people. The leadership in India stayed with capitalism (private enterprise) when China turned to revolutionary people's socialism with communism projected for the future. I am certain that everyone in this room has the intelligence to understand that India's rice riots and street sleepers are not indications that China has taken the wrong road."

"But they're starving in China," he said with great vehemence, on his feet with his hair streaming over his forehead, fists balled, chest out, shoulders thrown back.

"No one starves in China, that's your ignorance speaking now. You were probably just lying before, but it is possible that you are ignorant enough to think that people starve in China still, because they were starving in such great numbers when you were there in the forties serving the fascist military-industrial establishment. You people's ignorance on these matters has prompted the Chinese and other third world nations to the observation that you all live behind a veritable curtain of ignorance. There are more people starving in the U.S., in the Black Belt of southeastern U.S. in all the large cities, in the Appalachian Mountains and grape fields of California than in any other country on earth with the possible exception of India. China sends grain to other countries on a long-term, interest-free-loan basis. Vietnam, Egypt, Pakistan, and some others are eating Chinese surplus food supplies right now."

"Nigger they just bought a hundred thousand tons of wheat from Canada last month."

"You did say they 'bought' it, it means that they must be doing pretty well; the principle of economic advantage means that the people in their respective areas, nations if you prefer, with their respective differences in climate and topography should produce that thing which is easy and natural for them to produce. With proper organization they will be able to produce a surplus of this thing that they produce well. It is this surplus that the well-ordered society (of today at least) uses to exchange for the things that they cannot produce economically. China bought that wheat from Canada with other food products and raw materials that Canada needed. That deal last month was simply good economics on China's part. Canada buys beef from Argentina. Does that mean that Canada is about to collapse economically? Nothing stays the same, not even for an instant. If a thing isn't growing, it's decaying. People's government has been on the march since the close of World War II everywhere, building, developing, challenging, and defeating the capitalist-based systems that function on servitude of the people. The inevitable failure will be with capitalism, the guns of Vietnam will sound the death knell of capitalism. We know how to fight you now; capitalism is dying right here tonight, look at yourself, you're defeated." He was advancing on me in his Marquis of Queensberry boxing stance. I got out of the class that night, I haven't been able to get out of the joint, however.

We don't want people like Davis teaching the children, he has himself been educated into inanity. His favorite platitude was that Americans "enjoy hard work, desire gainful employment, and have the natural inclination to be thrifty and save." This is a shot against the automated welfare state. He believes that Americans would rather work with their hands than use a machine that could do the same work better and faster. Sounds pretty silly to me. I certainly don't like to work. No one could honestly enjoy the monotony of an assembly line. And the garbage collecting, the street

sweeping, the window washing. I'm all for the machines taking over in every sector of the economy where they can be applied. I wouldn't have the least difficulty in finding something to do with my time. As long as my check comes by mail, as long as I didn't have to stand in some line somewhere to pick it up, I would never have a complaint. To eat bread "in the sweat of thy face" was intended as a curse. The conservatives (of their privilege) would have us now believe that work is great fun. The capitalist Eden fits my description of hell.

To destroy it will require cooperation and communion between our related parts; communion between colony and colony, nation and nation. The common bond will be the desire to humble the oppressor, the need to destroy capitalist man and his terrible, ugly machine. If there were any differences or grievances between us in the black colonies and the peoples of other colonies across the country, around the world, we should be willing to forget them in the desperate need for coordination against Amerikan fascism.

International coordination is the key to defeating this thing that must expand to live. Our inability to work with other peoples, other slaves who have the same master, is a consequence of the inferiority complex we have been conditioned into. We're afraid that in the process the Chinese will trick us, or the white folks who support socialism and liberation of all the Amerikan colonies really just want to use us, trick us. "We can't trust them, they'll trick us." Well, if we're tricks we can expect to get tricked and we should rightly be afraid. This paranoia is a carry-over from the days when a white face in a black crowd meant that the white brain was controlling things. It is a carry-over from the days when some of us felt that nothing could function properly without the presence of a white brain, when we were sufficiently convinced of our own inferiority to allow them to take us over. Now as things stand in the new light of different days, with our revolution in the doldrums, our struggles counterpoised by vicious political kills and avalanches of propaganda, terror, and tokenism, we must overcome the paranoia. It is based on lack of confidence in our ability to control situations. Yet no one can take us over or betray our interests if we are vigilant and aggressively intelligent. We must accept the spirit of the true internationalism called for by Comrade Che Guevara. It is not a matter of trusting anyone, though I personally find that I can still trust certain general types of people since I am of that people. I am also assured of my ability to detect in advance any atavistic changes that portend betrayal. It isn't just a matter of trusting the goodwill of other slaves and other colonies and other peoples, it is simply a matter of common need. We need allies, we have a powerful enemy who cannot be defeated without an allied effort! The enemy at present is the capitalist system and its supporters. Our prime interest is to destroy them. Anyone else with this same interest must be embraced, we must work with, beside, through, over, under anyone, regardless of their external physical features, whose aim is the same as ours in this. Capitalism must be destroyed, and after it is destroyed, if we find that we still have problems, we'll work them out. That, the nature of life, struggle, permanent revolution; that is the situation we were born into. There are other peoples on this earth. In denying their existence and turning inward in our misery and accepting any form of racism we are taking on the characteristic of our enemy. We are resigning ourselves to defeat. For in forming a conspiracy aimed at the destruction of the system that holds us all in the throes of a desperate insecurity we must have coordinating elements connecting us and our moves to the moves of the other colonies, the African colonies, those in Asia and Latin Amerika, in Appalachia and the southwestern bean fields. If it is more expedient for a white revolutionary to neutralize a certain area, should I deny him the opportunity to contribute by withholding the protective influence of my cooperation?! If I did it would make me a fool and a myopic coward—a trick.

The revolutionary of Vietnam, this brother is so tried, so tested, so clearly antifascist, anti-

Amerikan, that I must be suspicious of the sincerity of any black who claims anti-Amerikanism and antifascism but who cannot embrace the Cong. The Chinese have aided every anticolonial movement that has occurred since they were successful in their own, particularly the ones in Africa. They have offered us in the Amerikan colonies any and all support that we require, from hand grenades to H-bombs. Some of us would deny these wonderful and righteous people. I accept their assistance in my struggle with our mutual enemy. I accept and appreciate any love that we can build out of our relation in crisis. I'll never, never allow my enemy to turn my mind or hand against them. The Yankee dog that proposes to me that I should join him in containing the freedom of a Vietnamese or a Chinese brother of the revolution is going to get spat on. I don't care how much he has to offer in the way of short-term material benefits.

We must establish a true internationalism with other anticolonial peoples. Then we will be on the road of the true revolutionary. Only then can we expect to be able to seize the power that is rightfully ours, the power to control the circumstances of our day-to-day lives.

The fascist must expand to live. Consequently he has pushed his frontiers to the farthest lands and peoples. This is an aspect of his being, an ungovernable compulsion. This perverted mechanical monster suffers from a disease that forces him to build ugly things and destroy beauty wherever he finds it. I just read in a legal newspaper that 50 percent of all the people ever executed in this country by the state were black and 100 percent were lower-class poor. I'm going to bust my heart trying to stop these smug, degenerate, primitive, omnivorous, uncivil ... and anyone who would aid me, I embrace you. We of the black Amerikan colony must finally take courage, control our fear, and adopt a realistic picture of this world and our place within it. We are not fascist, or Amerikans. We are an oppressed, economically depressed colonial people. We were brought here, from Africa and other parts of the world of palm and sun, under duress, and have passed all our days here under duress. The people who run this country will never let us succeed to power. Everything in history that was of any value was taken by force. We must organize our thoughts, get behind the revolutionary vanguard, make the correct alliances this time. We must fall on our enemies, the enemies of all righteousness, with a ruthless relentless will to win! History sweeps on, we must not let it escape our influence this time!

I am an extremist. I call for extreme measures to solve extreme problems. Where face and freedom are concerned I do not use or prescribe half measures. To me life without control over the determining factors is not worth the effort of drawing breath. Without self-determination I am extremely displeased.

International capitalism cannot be destroyed without the extremes of struggle. The entire colonial world is watching the blacks inside the U.S., wondering and waiting for us to come to our senses. Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside. We are the only ones (besides the very small white minority left) who can get at the monster's heart without subjecting the world to nuclear fire. We have a momentous historical role to act out if we will. The whole world for all time in the future will love us and remember us as the righteous people who made it possible for the world to live on. If we fail through fear and lack of aggressive imagination, then the slaves of the future will curse us, as we sometimes curse those of yesterday. I don't want to die and leave a few sad songs and a hump in the ground as my only monument. I want to leave a world that is liberated from trash, pollution, racism, poverty nation-states, nation-state wars and armies, from pomp, bigotry, parochialism, a thousand different brands of untruth, and licentious usurious economics.

We must build the true internationalism now. Getting to know people under crisis is the best way to learn them. Crisis situations show up their weakness and strength. They outline our humanity

in vivid detail. If there is any basis for a belief in the universality of man then we will find it in this struggle against the enemy of all mankind.

Week 11

White-Skin Privilege

The 1960s saw the emergence of a “New Left” that was distinguished from the Old (Communist) Left by its rejection of the working class as a revolutionary subject. This predominately white movement wrestled with how to come to terms with the dynamic Black political movements of the time, but it was deeply split over many issues.

The 1969 SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) convention in Chicago sharpened many of these dividing lines. The contending factions were: the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), an Old Left split from the Communist Party; Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM, pronounced “rim”), a grouping that eventually became the Weathermen; and RYM2, an Maoist grouping that later gave birth to many other anti-revisionist organizations.

Noel Ignatiev and Ted Allen were former members of the Communist Party who left it along with Harry Haywood. Both were also members of RYM2. In the following two pieces, they polemicize against the positions of PLP and RYM.

11.1 Ted Allen and Noel Ignatiev, *White Blindspot* (1967)

It is only the Blindspot in the eyes of America, and its historians, that can overlook and misread so clean and encouraging a chapter of human struggle and human uplift.—W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (p. 577)

The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown and black.—Ibid. (p. 16)

In response to your request for comments from readers, I am writing this letter raising what I consider to be the fundamental error in your strategic outlook for the revolutionary struggle of the American working class.

In my opinion, this error consists of your failure to grasp and incorporate in your program the idea contained in the following statement by Marx:

In the United States of North America every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate

itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded. (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 10, Section 7)

While you pay a great deal of attention to the Negro liberation movement, and correctly recognize it as a part of the global struggles for national liberation, you fail to discover the specific role it plays in the proletarian revolution in the United States. Thus, in your strategy for the proletarian revolution, you place the Negro question outside of the class struggle.

In my opinion you do this in spite of the fact that you cite Mao's correct words that, "In the final analysis, a national struggle is a question of class struggle." In this letter, I shall attempt to demonstrate the truth of my criticism and, in the process, suggest what I consider to be the correct strategy for the American working class.

The Greatest Barrier to Class Consciousness

The greatest ideological barrier to the achievement of proletarian class consciousness, solidarity and political action is now, and has been historically, white chauvinism. White chauvinism is the ideological bulwark of the practice of white supremacy, the general oppression of blacks by whites.

The U.S. ruling class has made a deal with the misleaders of American labor, and through them with the masses of white workers. The terms of the deal, worked out over the three hundred year history of the development of capitalism in our country, are these: you white workers help us conquer the world and enslave the non-white majority of the earth's laboring force, and we will repay you with a monopoly of the skilled jobs, we will cushion you against the most severe shocks of the economic cycle, provide you with health and education facilities superior to those of the non-white population, grant you the freedom to spend your money and leisure time as you wish without social restrictions, enable you on occasion to promote one of your number out of the ranks of the laboring class, and in general confer on you the material and spiritual privileges befitting your white skin.

Of course there are dislocations in this set-up. Contradictions between antagonistic forces cannot be resolved except by revolution. The masses of white workers produce vast quantities of value, and there is consequently an unceasing struggle over how this value shall be divided—within the pre-imposed limits—of the deal.

The Original 'Sweetheart Agreement'!

But in spite of this unceasing and often fierce struggle, what exists is an opportunistic "contract" between the exploiters and a part of the exploited, at the expense of the rest of the exploited-in fact, the original "sweetheart agreement."

Does this mean that the white workers have no revolutionary potential, that they should be written out of the ranks of the revolutionary forces? Does it mean that, as far as the white workers are concerned, communists must sit passively and wait until the ruling class, of its own necessity (e.g. loss of colonial holdings) moves to cut its losses at the expense of some of the white workers' racial privileges and attempts to reduce them to or near the level of black, brown and yellow workers?

It does not mean either of these things. In spite of their privileges, the white workers (except for the aristocracy of labor) are exploited proletarians, victims of "the stupid system of violence and robbery which we call Law and Industry." (G.B. Shaw) In the struggle for socialism, as well as the struggle for immediate reforms, without which the working class will never achieve socialist

consciousness, the white workers, like their black, brown and yellow brothers, have a “world to win.” But they have more to lose than their chains; they have also to “lose” their white-skin privileges, the perquisites that separate them from the rest of the working class, that act as the material base for the split in the ranks of labor.

PL deals with the struggle for the unity of the working class in the following manner from your convention documents:

The unity of black and white workers can be forged only in the course of winning the white workers to struggle against the common class enemy for their own class demands, and by combating racism and by supporting the cause of Black Liberation.

And in another passage, this time from the editorial on Watts in the October 1965 issue of PL, we read the following:

White workers today are generally better off than the black people, who are engaged in a militant struggle for more jobs, housing and full political rights. But even today, where white workers are fighting for the same demands, they are also ruthlessly wiped out, like the unemployed coal miners of Hazard, Kentucky or the 80,000 laid off white railroad workers, victims of the Johnson-bosses-union gang-up or the teamsters shot at in a recent Tennessee strike.

They, too, meet up with violent repression at the hands of the ruling class.

As more and more white workers lose their jobs due to automation and the inability of the capitalist war economy to grow along with the population, they too will have to fight for their economic and political demands, or go under.

The Johnson administration has only one answer for workers who struggle for a better life—armed terror and suppression. Just as it commits genocide in Vietnam and the Congo, the government does not hesitate to use its army against the black people at home. Similarly, the same thing is in store for white workers who fight back as soon as they feel the squeeze.

By rejecting the racist slanders of the press and the hysteria whipped up by the politicians who serve the bosses, by supporting the black people in their liberation struggle, white workers are protecting themselves and preparing their own defense for the attacks Johnson will unleash against them when he and his bosses cannot meet their demands.

The ‘Parallel Struggles’ Fallacy

Both of these passages are representative of the general line of PL; both avoid the central question of the struggle against white supremacy. Both explicit and implicit in the passages cited is the concept that white workers have “their own class demands” which are separate from the demands of Negro liberation (which you summarize as “more jobs, housing and full political rights”), and that in the parallel struggles of two groups of workers for two sets of demands lies the path to the unity of black and white workers.

This is wrong on two counts: in the first place, it is not correct to reduce the demands of the Negro liberation movement to “more jobs, housing and full political rights.” These are the demands of all workers. (Nor is it enough to toss in the demand for self-determination, as you do elsewhere, as a slogan for the Negro nation: the writings of Lenin on the national-colonial question make

it abundantly clear that self-determination of an oppressed nation is a slogan directed toward the working class of the oppressor nation.) The fundamental demand of Negro liberation is and has been for one hundred years the ending of white supremacy, the granting to the Negro people of every bourgeois right held by every other sector of the American people, excepting the other oppressed national minorities.

In the second place, the ending of white supremacy is not solely a demand of the Negro people, separate from the class demands of the entire working class. It cannot be left to the Negro people to fight it alone, while the white workers “sympathize with their fight,” “support it,” “reject racist slanders” etc. but actually fight for their “own” demands.

The ideology of white chauvinism is bourgeois poison aimed primarily at the white workers, utilized as a weapon by the ruling class to subjugate black and white workers. It has its material base in the practice of white supremacy, which is a crime not merely against non-whites but against the entire proletariat. Therefore, its elimination certainly qualifies as one of the class demands of the entire working class. In fact, considering the role that this vile practice has historically played in holding back the struggle of the American working class, the fight against white supremacy becomes the central immediate task of the entire working class.

The incorrect formulations and evasions which abound in the two passages have cited from PL documents are not mere slips of the pen. For nowhere in your literature do we find a single appeal to the white workers to fight against white supremacy in the only way possible, by repudiating their white-skin privileges and joining in a struggle with the rest of the working class for the demands of the entire class.

Programmatic Error: A Hypothetical Case

Your wrong theoretical approach to this question expresses itself in a wrong program. Thus, in an article by Antaeus in PL of Oct.-Nov. 1966, it is stated:

It now remains for a revitalized labor movement, led by the rank-and-file, to fulfill one of its greatest inheritances from its glorious past: to fight the ‘national interest’ squeeze of the Johnsons and the Kennedys, and their corporate masters; to raise the deteriorating standards of the working class, to curb unemployment, especially among black, Puerto Rican and Mexican workers, to fight all this by launching a nation-wide; struggle for shorter hours at 40 hours pay.

My, my. It seems that the shorter work week has more uses than aspirin. Now, it is probably true that the winning of the shorter work week would provide more jobs for the Negro, Puerto Rican and Mexican workers.

One can easily compute the mathematics of it: in a factory presently operating with 6 toolmakers, 60 machine operators, 60 assemblers, 6 packers and 3 sweepers, each working 40 hours a week, if the work week were shortened to 30 hours the following changes, more or less, could be expected: in place of the present 6 toolmakers (all white), 8 would be required to produce the same quantity of value in 30 hours that is produced in 40. However, since there is a shortage of toolmakers, they would continue on 40 hours, drawing overtime pay. In place of the 60 machine operators (all white), 80 would be required; the additional 20 would be drawn from those assemblers with the greatest seniority (all white). We now have 40 assemblers left, but need 80; their ranks would be filled by advertising in the “help-wanted, women” section, or from the ranks of the unemployed white men. For the increase of two packers required, the plant would hire one white and one Negro. And finally,

to provide the additional sweeper (couldn't we do without him since we're now on 30 hours?), a Negro would be hired, in accordance with the traditional personnel policy.

Thus, we would have a net gain of two jobs for Negroes. Perhaps exaggerated, but not much. Of course, those who put forward the demand for the shorter work week as a partial solution to the problem of Negro oppression argue that Negroes would benefit from it to a greater extent proportionately, than their numbers in the population, since they make up a disproportionate share of the unemployed. That is possibly so. One can concede the possibility (although not the certainty) that out of the 62 or 63 new workers needed in my example, maybe four, instead of two, would be recruited from the ranks of the Negro unemployed; perhaps even the lily-whiteness of the ranks of the assemblers might be tinted a little.

'Fair Employment Through Full Employment': A White Supremacist Slogan

But would this disturb the institution of white supremacy? I am not here opposing the "30 for 40" slogan. But raising it the way you do, to "curb unemployment, especially among black, Puerto Rican and Mexican workers," is merely an echo of the "Fair employment through full employment" argument of Secretary of Labor Wirtz and other spokesmen of the "liberal" wing of the ruling class. Even at its best (which will never be) "fair employment through full employment" is just another way of excusing the practice of leaving the Negroes as the last hired. Under such a slogan we may be assured that the last unemployed man or woman hired—the one that makes it "full"—will also be the one that makes it "fair." In other words, "fair employment through full employment" is another way of saying that job discrimination against Negroes will be maintained as long as it is possible to do so.

The point is: raising the demand for a larger slice of the pie for the working class does not in itself alter the apportionment of the slice within the working class. In fact, the ruling class has always utilized every concession won from it to increase the gap between white and black, thus turning even a victory of the working class into a cause of greater division. The shorter work week, with the promise of more jobs for those last hired, does not challenge the pattern of who shall be last hired, and therefore does not alter the inequality of white and black workers.

Is it not a fact that there have been times when the average real income of the Negro worker has increased, while at the same time the gap between the Negro and white worker has also increased? Thus, while the living conditions of the Negro people may have improved for a time absolutely, relative to those of the white population they deteriorated. To accept the premise that the way to improve conditions for the Negro workers is by increasing the proportion of the value created that goes to all workers is equivalent to institutionalizing the split in the working class, and accepting the inferior status of the Negro and other colored workers.

'If you Want Shorter Hours, Let Me Tell You What To Do...'

I would go further—the working class will not be able to win the shorter work week, will not even be able to resist the growing offensive of the ruling class, unless it first comes to grips with white supremacy as the chief cause of the division within its ranks.

There is no easy way around this problem. The struggle against white supremacy cannot be replaced by the struggle for a larger portion of the pie to be parceled out unequally among the workers. The only way to overcome the division in the working class is by overcoming it.

Elsewhere in your literature you raise the demand that 8000 of the jobs in the big industrial plants in the Watts ghetto should go to the Negro residents of Watts, since they make up 80%

of tile area's population. In my opinion, this demand contains some merit, as well as some faults. But taking it for its merit, that it raises the need for a more equal distribution of the existing jobs instead of banking on the same unequal distribution of new jobs, let me place the question: for whom is this demand raised? For the Negro workers and unemployed alone? In that case it is a divisive slogan, and should be dropped. For the entire working class? In that case it is, at least partially, a unifying slogan, and should be supported. But then it is necessary to explain to the white workers, and especially those white workers at the big plants in Watts, why they should support such, a demand, even though it apparently threatens some of them with the loss of their jobs.

It is the same with the slogan which I understand was raised in the election campaign of Wendy Nakashima in New York City last year. I am told that her demand for preferential hiring for Negroes and Puerto Ricans received quite a bit of support in the mainly Negro and Puerto Rican district in which she campaigned. It is easy to see why. But if that is a good demand—and I am convinced that it is—then it must be good also for the white workers, and they must be explained the reasons why so that they may become active partisans of it.

For, make no mistake about it, with the U.S. imperialist economy stagnating or even contracting, the ending of white supremacy, the ending of the privileged position of white workers means fewer jobs for white workers, fewer skilled jobs, poorer housing, etc.—if it goes no further than that. For it is obvious that if the rate of unemployment among Negroes is lowered from around 25% where it now stands to about 8% (which is “normal” in this period of imperialist decline for workers not suffering from national oppression or “favored” by white supremacy) then the rate of unemployment among white workers must be increased from the 5% where it now stands (by virtue of their white-skin privileges) to the 8% which is “normal.” And likewise with the proportion of skilled and unskilled jobs held by Negro and white workers, and so forth.

If It Goes No Further Than That...

But please note the phrase in my last paragraph: “if it goes no further than that.” For the consequences of the ending of white supremacy, which can only be ended by mobilizing and raising the consciousness of the entire working class, would extend far beyond the point of spreading out the misery more equitably. The result of such a struggle would be a working class that was class conscious, highly organized, experienced and militant—in short, united—and ready to confront the ruling class as a solid block.

The ending of white supremacy does not pose the slightest peril to the real interests of the white workers; it definitely poses a peril to their fancied interests, their counterfeit interests, their white-skin privileges.

As long as white supremacy is permitted to divide the working class, so long will the struggle of the working class remain on two separate planes, one concerned with their “own” class demands and the other, on a more elementary plane (but with a much higher degree of class consciousness) fighting first for the ordinary bourgeois rights which were won long ago for the rest of the workers. As soon as white supremacy is eliminated as a force within the working class, the decks will be cleared for action by the entire class against its enemy.

And what would be the outcome of such a struggle? Well, consider: if it were not for the ideology of white chauvinism, the American workers would by now have a labor party, which would represent a step forward in the class struggle. If it were not for the ideology of white chauvinism, the South would be organized, with all that that implies. If it were not for the ideology of white chauvinism

the American workers could see clearly the racist, imperialist, anti-working class character of the US aggression in Vietnam, and oppose it from the only possible proletarian standpoint—opposition to US imperialism.

Communists (individually this is the task primarily of white communists, although collectively it is the responsibility of the whole party) must go to the white workers and say frankly: you must renounce the privileges you now hold, must join the Negro, Puerto Rican and other colored workers in fighting white supremacy, must make this the first, immediate and most urgent task of the entire working class, in exchange for which you, together with the rest of the workers will receive all the benefits which are sure to come from one working class (of several colors) fighting together.

This does not mean that the process will develop in clear stages, i.e., first the ending of white supremacy, then a massive struggle for reforms, then revolution. It is probable that Negro liberation will not take place without the conquest of power by the working class in our country as a whole. What it means is that, in the course of mobilizing the entire working class to fight white supremacy some victories will be won and, most important of all, the ideology of white chauvinism will be widely exposed as the weapon of the oppressor, thus preparing the working class for the assumption of power. In this way the Russian workers, led by the Bolsheviks, made the liberation of their “own” colonies an integral part of their own class demands (now let us use your phrase without quotation marks) and thus were prepared to carry out their revolution.

‘The Real Secret’—An Instructive Parallel

When we consult the writings of the founders of scientific socialism, we find a wealth of material on this question. In a Resolution on Relations Between the Irish and the English Working Classes, written by Marx in 1869 for the International Workingmen’s Association, we read the following:

On the other hand, the English bourgeoisie has not only exploited Irish poverty in order to worsen the condition of the working class in England, by the forced transplantation of poor Irish peasants, but it has moreover divided the proletariat into hostile camps. The revolutionary fire of the Celtic workers does not harmonize with the restrained force but slowness of the Anglo-Saxons. In all the big industrial centers of England a deep antagonism exists between the English and Irish workers.

The average English worker hates the Irish as a competitor who lowers his wages and level of living. He feels national and religious antagonism towards him. He appears to him in much the same light as the black slaves appeared to the poor whites in the Southern States of North America. This antagonism between the proletarians of England is artificially cultivated and maintained by the bourgeoisie. It knows that in this antagonism lies the real secret of maintaining its power.

And in the same year, on Nov. 29, in a letter to Kugelman, Marx wrote:

I have become more and more convinced—and the only question is to bring this conviction home to the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most definite way from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish, but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship. And, indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English

proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes, because it must join with them in a common front against Ireland. Every one of its movements in England itself is crippled by the disunion with the Irish, who form a very important section of the working class in England.

Please note the last phrase in the above citation. Now, if Marx could correctly observe that the Irish workers formed a “very important section of the working class in England” in 1869, what are we to say of the position of the Negro workers in the American working class in 1967?

Black Workers Are Proletarians—Not ‘Allies’ of the Proletariat

This brings me to another error you make. For it follows logically from your first error of placing the national question outside of the bounds of the class struggle that you also isolate the Negro workers from the working class as a whole. In actuality, you relegate the Negro workers to a kind of limbo, peripheral to the main body of the working class, “allies” of the working class—anything but the integral part of it that they are.

The proof of this assertion lies in your underestimation of the importance of the Negro liberation struggle for the future of the American working class. Yes, I say underestimation, for that is in fact what you are guilty of in practice. I will give you some examples.

You correctly pose as one of the tasks before the working class that of building a third party, a labor party. But just such a party is being born under your very eyes, and you are blinded to it by your chauvinist (might as well speak plainly) lack of appreciation of the significance of the Negro liberation movement, such as the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, Alabama, and the Freedom Democratic Party in Mississippi, as well as other stirrings in the same direction throughout the country. Of course these movements differ in their degrees of clarity and maturity, but is there any doubt that they represent motion toward a breakaway from the two-party stranglehold? Suppose the Negro people succeed in launching such a party, will it not contain within it the essentials of a labor party program, in spite of its label as a Negro party? Will it not then be a prime task for those armed with Marxist-Leninist theory to take the program of such a party to the white workers and rally their support for it, whatever its name? And even if this party makes its appearance under less than ideal circumstances, for example under the auspices of a demagogue and opportunist like Adam Clayton Powell, as long as it is a real living party and not still born like the Freedom Now Party of 1963, the same thing will hold true—for let us not forget that the CIO was born in 1935 by one labor faker, John L. Lewis, punching another, William Hutcheson, in the jaw!

If we are dialecticians, we base ourselves on what is new, and look under the appearance of things to discover their essence. And one of the essential features of American history, which must be understood by everyone who hopes to apply Marxist-Leninist theory to the specific conditions of our country, is that traditionally the Negro people, for very real reasons, have carried forward the demands of the entire working class, cloaked in the garb of Negro rights!

This is true even now of the Black Power slogan, whose significance is not limited to the Negro people. As a white worker, I declare that I would a thousand times sooner live under the Black Power of Stokely Carmichael than under the “white” imperialist power of Lyndon Baines Johnson!

The Only Choice

And this is the choice which today, on one level or another, confronts every white worker. It can be seen most clearly in Sunflower County, Mississippi, where the only alternative to Black Power, for both black and white poor, is Eastland power. But the developing reality of the class struggle will soon bring forward in dramatic contrast everywhere the truth that there are only two paths open to the white workers: with the boss, or with the Negro workers; abandonment of all claim to share in the shaping of our destiny, or repudiation of the white-skin privileges, for which we, in our very infancy, pawned our revolutionary souls.

Another example is the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union. In your trade union program, you praise it as a necessary response to the Jim Crow practices of the labor brass. Fine! But you treat it as a stop-gap measure until such time as the racist unions change their policy. Why not instead recognize it as the kernel of a potential workers' controlled labor movement for all workers? You yourselves state that the union officials are now in the process of converting the unions into a fascist labor front. Instead of casting around for a way out of this by looking for some possible new alignments among the faction-ridden labor brass, why not recognize the importance of what is really new? In Mississippi we see the amazing (for the US) phenomenon of workers organizing their own union to fight the bosses. Are you going to let the fact that these workers are black blind you to the fact that they are, first of all workers, and leave you standing on the sidelines with your mouths full of patronizing words of admiration, unable to see that these black workers are today the foremost representatives, not merely of the Negro liberation movement, but of the American working class?

Indeed, under present conditions, with the Negro liberation struggle moving into high gear while the rest of the workers remain backward and relatively quiescent, to speak of the white workers "supporting" the Negro liberation movement is something of impertinence. The Negro liberation movement is today doing more for socialism and the class demands of the proletariat than any "working class" movement outside of it, and represents the firm and reliable support for any progressive struggles which may develop among white workers. More, it represents a solid base from which to develop such struggles. But in order to draw upon the strength of the Negro people's movement, the white workers must, first of all, break the links which tie them to the bosses (to the "leading-strings of the ruling classes," as Marx wrote Kugelman) by repudiating the white supremacist contract.

The Subjective Factor Was Ignored...

If this is not done we will see repetition of what has transpired more than once in our history: The crisis arrives, conditions worsen, the working people are radicalized—and then—defeat, because the subjective factor was ignored and the white-skin privilege and its vile ideology were not specifically, directly, consistently and courageously denounced and renounced in words and in deeds.

Up to now in my critical remarks I have dealt only with the white chauvinism in your erroneous theoretical line. But you also exhibit its inevitable concomitant: serious deviations in the direction of bourgeois nationalism. Since I regard the battle against bourgeois nationalism as primarily the responsibility of those Negroes imbued with Marxist-Leninist theory, I will limit myself to pointing out one example from your literature. In the November-December 1966 issue of SPARK, your West Coast paper, you report the speech of John Harris, whom you identify as a PLP organizer, before a mass rally in Watts: "Harris talked about the war in Vietnam and said that Black men should not fight against their Vietnamese brothers, 'who look more like them than the white man who sent

them there.”

Such a statement does not require much comment. If made by a black nationalist, it would be a positive statement and could be supported, but when made by a responsible leader of an organization which claims to be guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism, and then reprinted in an official publication of that organization, it becomes nothing more than shallow opportunism.

The vanguard of the working class is the home of the internationalist workers; while bourgeois nationalism, outside the party, may on occasion play a positive role, within the party it has no more place than the white chauvinism which engenders it.

I would like to conclude this letter by referring to the words of old John Brown. For many years it has been the fashion in American left-wing circles to pay homage to old Osawatomie, while ignoring the lessons he taught us. Usually this is done by dismissing his use of armed struggle under the pretext that it was “appropriate for another era.” But there was more to Brown than his determination and heroism; he was a serious and careful student of American social reality. In his last letter to his family, Brown wrote to his children to “abhor, with undying hatred also, that sum of all villainies—slavery.”

The ‘peculiar institution’

John Brown clearly understood that all the social evils of our country were summed up in the “peculiar institution” of African slavery, without whose abolition progress in any field would be impossible.

So it was to old John Brown, and so it is to us, his children. For, all the evils of US imperialist rule in its dying days—the barbarous wars of extermination launched against colonial and semi-colonial peoples, the murder by starvation, the mass insecurity, the fascist clamp being tightened on the American people, the trampling on culture and the contempt for the decent aspirations of humanity—all these are concentrated and summed up in the infernal theory and practice of white supremacy.

Therefore, the attack on white supremacy is the first order of business for all progressive forces in our country, and the key to strategy for Marxist-Leninists.

11.2 Noel Ignatiev, Without a Science of Navigation We Cannot Sail in Stormy Seas (1969)

The significance of the SDS Convention held from June 18–22 in Chicago is that it represents the first time since the Civil War and Reconstruction period that a convention made up almost entirely of whites was held which focused on the national-colonial question as the pivot of struggle and unity. The fact that it was a convention of students rather than proletarians was an important factor in shaping its proceedings.

The Convention took place against the general background of sharpening class struggles in the world, and especially the rise to pre-eminence of the struggles for national liberation of the oppressed peoples both outside and within the U.S. It reflected the general rise in consciousness among white U.S. radicals that the principal contradiction in the world today is that between U.S. imperialism and the nations it oppresses.

This general rise in consciousness was expressed in the outstanding positive achievement of the Convention: the expulsion of PLP as a group of fiends and traitors to the world-wide struggles of

the oppressed. An important role in bringing about the expulsion was played by representatives of the oppressed peoples themselves, specifically spokesmen for the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords Organization and the Brown Berets. PLP represents a specific variant of bourgeois ideology, best characterized as social-chauvinism, that is, socialist in words and chauvinist in deeds—talk about international proletarian solidarity and a practical united front with U.S. imperialism against the oppressed peoples.

The most pressing task for the movement in general, and SDS in particular, is the total isolation and defeat of PL, and the policies it represents. The question of the fight against PLP is not an internal one for SDS. It is a reflection of the fight against bourgeois ideology and politics which goes on constantly among the people as the main work of proletarian revolutionaries. It would be the gravest error to make a separation between the fight against PLP within the movement and the fight against bourgeois ideology among the masses.

Either Bourgeois Or Proletarian Ideology

Although PLP may temporarily be set back by advancing a more radical sounding form of bourgeois ideology, in the final analysis it can only be defeated on the basis of proletarian ideology and the practice derived from it. That is why it is necessary to examine the struggle between two lines which took place at the Convention both before and after the expulsion of PLP.

In order to do this it is necessary to examine the paper “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way The Wind Blows,” published in the Convention issue of *NLN*. The document is especially important because it represents the thinking of the majority of the national leadership which emerged from the Convention. All three national secretaries are signers of the paper; five of the eight members of the NIC (including two more signers) have been associated with its line. Therefore, every member of SDS should study it, and should not allow its length to defer him from that task.

The first thing that must be noted is the title, which gave us pause when we first read it. On further reflection, it became clear that its meaning could be best brought out by counterposing it to Lenin’s famous dictum: “Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.” In spite of its title, however, it would be a serious underestimation to think that Weatherman does not present a political line. On the contrary, its writers are to be commended for setting forth in generally clear and consistent terms a definite political line. The question is: what class does that line serve?

While the principal contradiction of the present epoch is that between U.S. imperialism and the nations it oppresses, the fundamental contradiction is, always has been, and always will be, as long as capitalism exists, that between socialized production and capitalistic appropriation, manifesting itself as a contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The central question of political economy, to which Marx devoted his life to answering, is—how do the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie stand in relation to each other? After a great deal of observation and participation, Marx summarized his findings, in *Wage-Labor and Capital*: “We see, therefore, that even if we remain within the relation of capital and wage labor, the interests of capital and the interests of wage labor are diametrically opposed.” From that discovery, Marx drew the conclusion—“Working men of all countries—unite!”

Now, one hundred years late, along comes Weatherman, with a “new” answer, which “improves” on Marx:

We are within the heartland of a world-wide monster, a country so rich from its world-

wide plunder that even the crumbs doled out to the enslaved masses within its borders provide for material existence very much above the conditions of the masses of people of the world. The US empire, as a world-wide system, channels wealth, based upon the labor and resources of the rest of the world, into the United States. The relative affluence existing in the United States is directly dependent upon the labor and natural resources of the peoples of the Third World. All of the United Airlines Astrojets, all the Holiday Inns, all of Hertz's automobiles, your television set, car and wardrobe already belong, to a large degree, to the people of the world.

In other words, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have a joint interest in plundering the dependent nations. One could hardly ask for a more direct statement. But, argue the writers of *Weatherman*, capitalism has developed to a new stage since Marx's time and that new state, imperialism, has divided the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, and has in fact created a situation whereby the bourgeoisie and proletariat of the oppressor nation take part (to an unequal degree, to be sure) in the exploitation of the oppressed nations.

Yes, it is true that imperialism introduces new conditions. Lenin described these new conditions in the following manner, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*: "Imperialism, which means the partition of the world, and the exploitation of other countries besides China, which means high monopoly profits for a handful of very rich countries, creates the economic possibility of corrupting the upper strata of the proletariat, and thereby fosters, gives form to, and strengthens opportunism."

Or, further, from *Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement*: "The bourgeoisie of a 'Great' imperialist power is economically able to bribe the upper strata of its workers, devoting one or two hundred million francs a year for this purpose, because its super-profits probably amount to a billion."

Or again, from the same work: "...while trusts, the financial oligarchy, high prices, etc., permit the bribing of small upper strata, they at the same time oppress, crush, ruin and torture the masses of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat more than ever."

And so on. In fact, Lenin, who devoted so much attention to the connection between imperialism and the "aristocracy of labor," who showed conclusively that opportunism in the labor movement rested mainly on the corruption of the bribed upper strata, was always careful to specify that the bribe was shared by only a minority of the working class, even in the case of the English workers from 1848-1868, when Britain enjoyed the industrial and colonial monopoly of the whole world.

Lenin never denied that the majority of workers in a given trade or even a given country could, for a considerable time, fall under the influence of the corrupt minority. But he never conceded that they had any real stake in doing so. "We cannot nor can anybody else calculate exactly what portion of the proletariat is following and will continue to follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will be revealed by the struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution. But we know definitely that the 'defenders of the father land' in the imperialist war represent only a minority." (*ibid.*)

Of course, the writers of *Weatherman* themselves say that "the real interests of the masses of oppressed whites in this country lie with the Black Liberation struggle..." But how do they define "real" interests?

As a whole, the long range interests of the non-colonial sections of the working class lie with overthrowing imperialism, with supporting self-determination for the oppressed nations (including the black colony), with supporting and fighting for international

socialism. However, virtually all of the white working class also has short-range privileges from imperialism, which are not false privileges but very real ones which give them an edge of vested interest and tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists, especially when the latter are in a relatively prosperous phase. When the imperialists are losing their empire, on the other hand, these short-ranged privileged interests are seen to be temporary (even though the privileges may be relatively greater over the faster-increasing immiseration of the oppressed peoples.) The long-range interests of workers in siding with the oppressed peoples are seen more clearly in the light of imperialism's impending defeat. Within the whole working class, the balance of anti-imperialist class interests with white mother country short-term privilege varies greatly.

Thus they counterpose the short-range interests of the white workers to their long-range interests. But that is not the way Lenin put it! Lenin defined opportunism as the sacrifice of the short and long-range interests of the entire working class to the temporary interests of a minority. There is all the difference in the world between the two formulations, as we shall see.

And this brings us to the matter of white supremacy and the white-skin privilege, of which Weatherman makes such a muddle. Now, it is true that, in regard to the upper crust of labor—foremen, some craftsmen, those who have been able to acquire enough property or stocks to be almost independent, many union officials, etc.—with regard to these sectors, white supremacy, and oppression of colonial peoples in general may serve their interests, although this is somewhat undercut by the developing crisis of imperialist policy.

How do matters stand with regard to the masses of whites? Weatherman includes them in the ranks of those whose interests are served by the white-skin privilege. And there we part company with them.

Whose Interests Are Served By White-Skin Privileges?

Are the real interests of the masses of white workers the same as, or in conflict with those of Black workers and other oppressed peoples? Should white workers side with the boss, or with the Black workers? Is the fight against white supremacy and the repudiation of the white-skin privilege in the real interests of white workers?

The answers to the above questions are decisive in determining the whole direction of strategy for white revolutionaries.

We were not the last to take note of the existence of white-skin privileges. In a paper, the *White Blindspot*, which we wrote two years ago together with Ted Allen, we pointed out:

The U.S. ruling class has made a deal with the mis-leaders of American labor, and through them with the masses of white workers. The terms of the deal, worked out over the three hundred year history of the development of capitalism in our country, are these: you white workers help us conquer the world and enslave the non-white majority of the earth's laboring force, and we will repay you with a monopoly of the skilled jobs, we will cushion you against the most severe shocks of the economic cycle, provide you with health and education facilities superior to those of the non-white population, grant you the freedom to spend your money and leisure time as you wish without social restrictions, enable you on occasion to promote one of your number out of the ranks of the laboring class, and in general confer on you the material and spiritual privileges befitting your white skin.

The cutting edge of that pamphlet was directed at PL, which denied and still denies the existence of any privileges accruing to whites in the U.S. However, even in that context we were careful to state, and to buttress by examples, that: "The ending of white supremacy does not pose the slightest peril to the real interests of the white workers; it definitely poses a peril to their fancied interests, their counterfeit interests, their white-skin privileges."

Let us look at the matter a little more closely, starting with three industries. In the auto industry, where white-skin privileges have been relatively less than perhaps any other, the workers for a fairly long period enjoyed the best conditions of any laborers in the U.S. However, after years of acceptance by the white workers of their own monopoly in the skilled trades, the workers face speed-up, falling real wages, plant relocations and layoffs.

In the mining industry, where white-skin privileges took on a more hardened form—sole access to the mechanized jobs which were least susceptible to automation—the total number of workers has been cut to one-fourth of what it was, vast areas of West Virginia and Kentucky have been laid waste, medical facilities (once the pride of organized labor) are primitive, and "hillbilly heavens" have sprung up across northern cities.

In the southern textile industry, where the white-skin privilege was more highly developed to mean total exclusion of Blacks from the mills, the workers live under conditions so degraded that in some areas they can only be described as barbaric.

Three industries, three degrees of white-skin privilege. The greater and more firmly established the privilege, the greater the misery. The pattern is not coincidence; in every case cited, the deterioration of the conditions of the workers, black and white, can be shown to be the result of the more or less conscious decision of the white workers to obtain, maintain or expand their social and economic white-skin privileges, which required the renunciation of proletarian class solidarity.

And these examples are taken as separate industries, limited to "the (economic) relation of capital and wage labor." To take up the whole question of the political weakness of the U.S. proletariat, the lack of a labor party, etc., would strengthen our argument!

In what sense, then, can white supremacy be said to be in the interests, either short or long-range, of the white workers? If the acceptance of white-skin privilege is in their interests, what would the white workers have to do to run counter to their interests?!

White supremacy is the real secret of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the hidden cause behind the failure of the labor movement in this country. White-skin privileges serve only the bourgeoisie, and precisely for that reason they will not let us escape them, but instead pursue us with them through every hour of our life, no matter where we go. They are poison bait. To suggest that the acceptance of white-skin privilege is in the interests of white workers is equivalent to suggesting that swallowing the worm with the hook in it is in the interests of the fish. To argue that repudiating these privileges is a "sacrifice" is to argue that the fish is making a sacrifice when it leaps from the water, flips its tail, shakes its head furiously in every direction and throws the barbed offering.

Of course the class struggle involves sacrifices. Jose Marti said, "revolution is sacrifice and valor." And remember Marx's admiration for the heroic sacrifices of the Communards, who "stormed the heavens." The first group of white workers who take action against the white-skin privilege can expect to be visited by all the furies of a bourgeoisie being attacked at its most sensitive spot. These workers will be a Legion of John Browns, honored forever for the sacrifices they will surely have to make. But one thing they will not be sacrificing is their class interests, either short or long-range. To argue otherwise is to make a mockery of proletarian morality, which is always consistent with the class interests of the proletariat.

One of two things—EITHER the struggle against white supremacy is in both the short and

long-range class interests of white workers, in which case they can be won to it: OR it is not in their short-range interests but is in their interests later on, in which case we will never get to “later on.”

Revolutionary Workers Or Rats Leaving A Sinking Ship

Weatherman is in fact telling white workers that they do not have to fight white supremacy now, since they benefit from it, but at some point in the future they will have to. Isn't this the same old tired line of every while chauvinist “socialist” group from the Socialist Party to PLP? Isn't this saying to the white workers, in essence, that socialism is good for all of us, but as long as we have capitalism we ought to have the most voracious, predatory type, since it brings us benefits in the short run? (At the recent NIC, one of the leading theoreticians of the Weatherman position argued, in relation to pre-World War II Germany, that while socialism was clearly in the interests of the workers, as long as they were not in a position to establish it, their interests were better served by Hitler than by the old bourgeois democratic regime. He did not say what kept the German workers from being in a position to establish socialism.)

Of course, the framers of Weatherman argue that the benefits of imperialism are being eroded by the resistance of the oppressed peoples, and that such erosion of privilege is the basis for revolutionary consciousness in the U.S. Any self-respecting white worker, accepting Weatherman's initial premise that he is actually benefiting from imperialist plunder of the colonies, is more likely to reason in another way: oh yeah? we'll see if those colored people can take away my loot!

That current of thought is quite widespread in the U.S. It was the basis of the Wallace position on the war—either win it or get the hell out. It starts from the same initial premise as Weatherman: that “we” have an interest in hanging on in Vietnam, and the only question is to balance the benefits against the cost.

And this line of chauvinism today and solidarity tomorrow is paraded by Weatherman under the name of Internationalism!

Up to this point we have assumed that the question of white supremacy was representative of the general question of support for oppressed peoples fighting U.S. imperialism, and that if we could demonstrate that the struggle against white supremacy is in the class interests of white workers right now, the principle would carryover to the Vietnamese, Congolese, etc. We have felt justified in making this assumption since Weatherman itself goes to great pains to point out the identity of the struggle of the Black people, whom they call an “internal colony,” with that of the external colonies of U.S. imperialism.

However, if the reader will go back and read Weatherman's description of U.S. affluence quoted above, he will note that the reference is to the “U.S. proletariat” as a whole, not white workers. In fact, the theoreticians of Weatherman charge us, the supporters of RYM II, with reducing the concept of proletarian internationalism to black-white relations in this country, and with forgetting the “fact” that the Black people are also profiting from the exploitation and plunder of the external colonies! After all, it does seem that Black people, in the U.S. have a somewhat higher standard of living than most colonial peoples throughout the world...

So now, according to Weatherman, not merely are white workers parasites, but black workers also. The internal colony is exploiting the external colonies. Will this lead them next to say that the semi-colonies of Latin America are exploiting the colonies of Africa? This is weird.

The Question Of U.S. “Affluence”

It is time to take up the question of the “affluence” of the U.S. upon which Weatherman bases so much of its argument.

(1) In the first place, it is mostly mythical. The description made by the writers does not fit the actual conditions of most skilled worker, let alone the masses of unskilled whites, whose life is more likely to consist of a ten-hour day, an old car absolutely necessary for getting to work, more than one member of the family working, no vacation, no provisions for old age or sickness, a house or apartment which, if rented, is falling apart and which, if purchased, will fall apart before the last payment or foreclosure, frequent periods of unemployment, a new coat every five years, etc., than the Scarsdale-ease described by the writers. Unfortunately, the writers have been swept up in the “American Dream.”

(2) The writers are making comparisons based on the boom phase of the economic cycle, when naturally the conditions of most workers improve a bit. An accurate estimate would entail averaging out the conditions of 1933 and 1968.

(3) It does seem to be true, however, that the conditions of the masses of U.S. workers are somewhat superior to workers in most other countries, although that is hard to gauge. If it is true, it does not necessarily follow that the superiority is due to imperialism, since the same superiority has existed since 1700, long before the imperialist epoch. It was the main reason (white) workers immigrated here from other countries.

Of course, we will immediately be charged with overlooking the extermination of the native Americans and the enslavement of Africans, which could be said to constitute early forms of imperialism, and therefore factors in U.S. “affluence.” As for the extermination of the Indians, what was taken from them was land, which never fell into the hands of the white masses who did the exterminating but instead enriched the railroad barons, cotton planters and cattle ranchers. For their loyalty in helping their masters steal the land and kill the rightful owners, the poor whites were rewarded with death and taxes, and monopolistic exclusion from land ownership.

As for African slavery—we agree that it could not have been maintained without the support of the masses of whites. Such support constitutes an integral part of the reactionary traditions of the U.S. nation. What adds a quality of grotesqueness to the shameful record is the fact that the “benefits” which the masses of whites received in return for their support of slavery can be best gauged by examining the conditions of free labor in the pre-Civil War south, or in the New England textile mills.

Marx, in speaking of differences in national wages (*Capital*, vol. I, chapter 22) observes that the value of labor-power in a given country is generally established by a number of factors, among them local tradition and the conditions prevailing at the time when that country entered upon the capitalistic era of production. Thus, Swedish workers enjoy better wages and living conditions than Italian workers, yet no one claims that one is at the expense of the other. The wages of the mass of workers stand in inverse proportion to the profits of capital, not to the wages of any other group of workers.

(4) The Weatherman formula ignores the history of struggle of U.S. labor, which has had a real effect on the conditions of the workers. For example, in the years 1937–38—the years of the building of the CIO—real wages and relative wages (wages in relation to profits) actually rose somewhat.

Weatherman’s false analysis of political economy leads them to the conclusion that it is not in the interests of white workers to unite with Black workers, and therefore to the practical abandonment of the fight against white supremacy. All their documents and speeches show a clear tendency to substitute calls for “support of national liberation” for the struggle against white supremacy which

is the basic and indispensable expression of such support on the part of whites.

Is it not clear that on the question of the fight against white supremacy Weatherman has arrived at the same position as PLP, from the “opposite” direction?

The line of denying the identity of interests of white and Black workers is anti-working class. In being anti-working class, it is, of necessity, anti-Black! To claim that the basis for winning masses of whites to an internationalist policy lies in the decline of privilege rather than in the relation of labor to capital (and that is what they are saying when they say, for example, “The potential for revolutionary consciousness does not always correspond to the ultimate class interests, particularly when imperialism is relatively prosperous and the movement is in an early stage.”) is to undercut the mass base among whites for a policy of proletarian internationalism. The consequences of treating white workers as an adjunct of the class struggle instead of an integral part of it are expressed in the slogan which has occasionally been raised by various Weatherman—create two, three, many John Browns.

Such a slogan sees the role of white revolutionaries quite apart from the immediate class interests of white workers, and thereby substitutes the heroic actions of a few whites for the heroic actions of the masses of white workers. The real slogan that must be put forward is—create two, three, many million John Browns, for that is the slogan which corresponds to both the immediate and long-range class interests of white workers.

Abandonment of the responsibility to organize white workers as part of a class is not support for national liberation but betrayal of it. This betrayal finds its crudest and most chauvinistic expression in the slogan—create two, three, many Vietnams.

In an oppressed nation, that slogan may have a certain justification as meaning the opening of new fronts against U.S. imperialism. We do not here propose to take up the question of whether it is the best summary of the strategy and tactics required to carry out such a perspective. But in an imperialist country, in the oppressor nation, the slogan is entirely out of place. Are the Weathermen asking US imperialism to send troops to Santo Domingo, or to Charleston, South Carolina?! Regardless of good intentions, that is the effect.

In the U.S. among white workers, the basic slogan of proletarian internationalism must be—Transform the imperialist war into a civil war. But Weatherman does not put that slogan forward, because civil war is the highest form of class struggle, and grows out of the class struggle, and Weatherman does not believe in the class struggle.

Can Black People Be Integrated Under Capitalism?

The reader may think it is absurd to even raise such a question in a discussion of the Weatherman paper. Let us see.

The writers treat us to a lengthy dissertation on the status of the Black people and the correct strategy for national liberation. We do not intend to go into such length on it, not because we agree with a single point in their analysis, but because we do not think it is incumbent on SDS and on white revolutionaries in general to be taking “positions” on this matter isolated from the thinking of Black Marxists. We have written a paper on the subject, which we regard as a contribution to the thinking of Marxists in general and at the proper moment we will offer it for consideration.

Nevertheless, there are some things in Weatherman which absolutely cannot go unchallenged. The real heart of their analysis of the status of the black people lies in the following paragraph:

A new black nation, different from the nations of Africa from which it comes, has been forged by the common historical experience of importation and slavery and caste

oppression; to claim that to be a nation it must of necessity now be based on common national territory apart from the colonizing nation is a mechanical application of criteria which were and are applicable to different situations.

What is specifically meant by the term caste is that all black people, on the basis of their common slave history, common culture and skin color are systematically denied access to particular job categories (or positions within job categories), social position etc., regardless of individual skills, talents, money or education. Within the working class, they are the most oppressed section; in the petit bourgeoisie, they are even more strictly confined to the lowest levels. Token exceptions aside, the specific content of this caste oppression is to maintain black people in the most exploitative and oppressive jobs and conditions. Therefore, since the lowest class is the working class, the black caste is almost entirely a caste of the working class, or positions as oppressed as the lower working class positions (poor black petit-bourgeoisie and farmers); it is a colonial labor caste, a colony whose common national character itself is defined by their common class position.

Now—we would like to ask: what is the difference between the above description and the condition of U.S. Jews fifty years ago, or the condition of Irish-Americans one hundred years ago? Of course, Weatherman will howl that they are speaking of an oppressed nation, an internal colony, that Black people cannot be integrated, etc.—but when the Black nation is reduced to a question of caste, in what respect does it differ from typical bourgeois explanation? Weatherman may believe in their hearts that Black people constitute an oppressed nation, but they do not say so in their analysis, except in generalities. What they say is that the “black colony ... is a colonial labor caste, a colony whose common national character itself is defined by their common class position...”

Is that any different from PLP’s characterization of Black people as “super-exploited workers”? And if that is the case, then why cannot the Black people be integrated like the Irish, Jews or Italians? “Race prejudice”?!

Continuing its “progress” backward, Weatherman says:

The black proletarian colony, being dispersed as such a large and exploited section of the work force, is essential to the survival of imperialism. Thus, even if the black liberation movement chose to try to attain self-determination in the form of a separate country (a legitimate part of the right to self-determination), existing side by side with the US, imperialism could not survive if they won it—and so would never give up without being defeated. Thus, a revolutionary nationalist movement could not win without destroying the state power of the imperialists; and it is for this reason that the black liberation movement, as a revolutionary nationalist movement for self-determination, is automatically in and of itself an inseparable part of the whole revolutionary struggle against US imperialism and for international socialism.

It is one thing to say as did Stalin that Black people cannot achieve liberation without breaking the power of capital. That was true of the Chinese people, the Vietnamese people and every other oppressed people that has broken the chains of imperialism. It was true, in a negative sense, of Ghana, Egypt, Indonesia and others—that is, their failure to break the power of capital led directly to their failure to win national liberation.

But it is another thing altogether to equate, as does Weatherman, the victory of national liberation in the oppressed nation with the establishment of socialism in the oppressor nation. Weatherman argues that because of the strategic location of Black people, in the cities, etc., they could, by

themselves “if necessary” win alone and that their victory would be synonymous with the victory of socialism throughout the U.S.

Yes, Black workers are in a strategic position, and they will certainly be in the forefront of the class struggle, as they have always been. However, white workers are also in a strategic position, generally surrounding the ghetto, and there ain’t gonna be socialism throughout the U.S. until the masses of white workers have been won to it.

In our opinion, it is quite conceivable that in the deep south, where Black people constitute a majority and where the conditions for Black nationhood exist, the Black people could, by waging people’s war, succeed in establishing liberated zones and even a Black People’s Republic, prior to the total victory of the proletariat throughout the U.S. As Lenin put it, “It is our right and duty to treat every Socialist of an oppressing nation who fails to conduct such propaganda (that is, propaganda for the freedom of secession) as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an absolute demand, even if the chance of secession being possible and ‘feasible’ before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand...” (Quoted by Stalin in *Foundations of Leninism*)

But to equate that possibility with socialism throughout the U.S. is to fall precisely into the error that Weatherman spends several paragraphs trying to avoid: “both racist tendencies: (1) that blacks shouldn’t go ahead with making the revolution, and (2) that blacks should go ahead alone with making it.” They state further:

Thus, even the winning of separate independence in the South would still be one step toward self-determination, and not equivalent to winning it; which, because of the economic position of the colony as a whole, would still require overthrowing the state power of the imperialists, taking over production and the whole economy and power, etc.

It seems to us that Weatherman, in equating self-determination for the Black nation with socialism throughout the U.S. is “determining” the content of self-determination and is, in effect, saying to the Black servants of the “white” movement—you can leave the table while we finish dinner, but make sure you come back and clean off the plates.

Is the Weatherman position that self-determination equals socialism any different than PL’s line that socialism equals self-determination?

The Liberation Of Women

Historically in the U.S., the fight for the emancipation of women and the fight for the freedom of Black people have always been linked. It is enough to note that the greatest of the Abolitionists—Phillips, Douglass, Parker, Grimke—participated in the women’s rights movement, and the greatest of the fighters for women’s rights—Stanton, Anthony—were crusaders for the freedom of Black people. This dovetailing of the two great movements is not accidental, nor is it primarily the result of the individual characters of the leaders. On the contrary, it is the logical result of their essential indivisibility.

History has shown that it is impossible to consistently sympathize with one of these two movements and oppose the other. A bad position on one must lead, if not corrected, to a bad position on the other. Having shown how the Weatherman position leads to the abandonment of the fight against white supremacy, let us see how matters stand with regard to the fight against male supremacy.

Should women fight for equality with men? Is the struggle for the freedom of the oppressed sex part of the anti-imperialist movement? Is it the responsibility of revolutionaries to attack and destroy male supremacy?

These are the fundamental questions. In searching for Weatherman's answers, we run into a problem. Generally speaking, the rule for dealing with the paper is: the more fully the writers bring out their politics, the more satisfaction we can give them. On the matter of the women's struggle, Weatherman deviates from the general policy for which we commended them in the beginning of this essay, of putting forth their line clearly. There is only about a half-column in *NLN* dealing with women's liberation, consisting largely of generalities, interspersed with references to "not much practice," "no programmatic direction," "no real answer," "we guess," etc. In our opinion it is strange, but by no means accidental, that the writers, who have the answers for every other question from the strategy for Black liberation to the building of a party, are struck dumb on this question.

This places us in a certain dilemma. On the one hand, if we deal only with what is written in Weatherman, we shall be unable to give complete satisfaction. On the other hand, if we recognize that the framers of Weatherman are still growing politically, that they have not formulated everything in black and white but have made their most advanced arguments orally, then we shall run the risk of distorting their position or, worse yet, suggesting ways for them to "improve" it.

To break out of this dilemma, it seems that the best way of dealing with this question is to set down what we, that is, those of us who are popularly identified as RYM II, offered at the NC, and then examine the content of the Weatherman's arguments against it. In doing so we shall have to rely largely on the memories of those who were there to judge whether we are being fair; and we shall have to wait until the framers of Weatherman publish a fuller statement setting forth their collective views on this subject, in order to deal with it adequately.

In the document *Unity Principles for SDS*, we presented five points which we thought could serve as the basis for unity in the organization. The second of these read:

2. OPPOSE MALE SUPREMACY. SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The proletariat cannot achieve complete freedom without achieving complete freedom for women. The struggle for women's liberation is a powerful force against U.S. imperialism. We are dedicated to fighting male supremacy, to destroying the physical and spiritual oppression of women by men, and to the achievement of full equality for women in every sphere of life.

We will fight for the equality of women in job status, wages and education, by launching campaigns to open up 'male jobs,' for equal pay for equal work, and for open admissions for women in technical schools and all-educational institutions.

We struggle against the subjugation of women in the family, and demand the provision of day care centers, public and free laundries, food centers and other facilities necessary to free women from their status as household drudges.

We oppose male chauvinism, and will fight for the placing of women in leading positions in all people's organizations, and will take the specific measure to guarantee that women can serve in leadership. We encourage the formation of 'women's militias' to ensure the fulfillment of the program of total equality for women.

We demand complete legal equality for women, and oppose existing marriage and divorce laws, prostitution laws, welfare laws and all other legal reinforcements of the subjugation of women. We affirm our solidarity with and draw inspiration from the courageous historical struggle of Black and third world women against the triple yoke of capitalist

white male oppression, the front line in the fight for the rights of all women. The fight for the equality of all women must recognize the primacy of the struggle to end oppression of Black and third world women and base the demands for equality upon the rejection of white skin privileges.

The response of Weatherman to the above was summarized in the speech of Barbara Riley's which was met with loud applause. Her arguments resolved into two basic points: (1) that the program was reformist, since the aim should not be to achieve equality under capitalism but to destroy the state and revolutionize the family, and (2) that the program did not take into sufficient account the danger of white women winning equality with men at the expense of Black, Latin and other Third World women, that is, it carried the danger of expanding rather than reducing privileges.

The first argument seems to us the product of rampant male chauvinism linked with a petit-bourgeois world outlook perfectly illustrated in the total overlooking of the sufferings of the masses of women and a contempt for their real needs. Such an attitude can only originate in the airy realms of bourgeois "freedom" and license. Do the theoreticians of Weatherman know that the average wage of all women is lower than the average wage of that of black men? Do they know that the status of women relative to men, measured by a dozen different yardsticks, has declined in the twentieth century? Are they such consummate revolutionaries that they can dismiss the daily, practical struggle of women to escape from household drudgery, humiliation, legal inequality, low wages—in short, to escape from male domination—irrelevant and reformist, since the task is to smash the state? On this very subject, Lenin wrote:

It is therefore perfectly right for us to put forward demands for the benefit of women. This is not a minimum program, nor a program of reform in the Social-Democratic sense, in the sense of the Second International. It does not show that we believe the bourgeoisie and its state will last forever, or even for a long time. Nor is it an attempt to pacify the masses of women with reforms and to divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle. It is nothing of the sort, and not any sort of reformist humbug either. Our demands are no more than practical conclusions, drawn by us from the crying needs and disgraceful humiliations that weak and underprivileged women must bear under the bourgeois system. We demonstrate thereby that we are aware of these needs and of the oppression of women, that we are conscious of the privileged position of the men, and that we hate—yes, hate—and want to remove whatever oppresses and harasses the working women, the wife of the worker, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man, and even in many respects the woman of the propertied classes. The rights and social measures we demand of bourgeois society for women are proof that we understand the position and interests of women and that we will take note of patronizing reformists. No, by no means. But as revolutionaries who call upon the women to take a hand as equals in the reconstruction of the economy and of the ideological superstructure. (Conversations with Clara Zetkin)

This same idea was put by one woman in the movement in the following manner:

Yes, I know that capitalism means misery. But as long as I have to live under it, I don't see why I would be more miserable than a man. It is true that I will not be able to win equality as long as the capitalists rule, but that is no reason why I shouldn't fight for

it. I may win some victories, which would make my life better, and, most of all, I shall certainly educate myself and some of my sisters about the workings of this system, and will learn better how to fight it. That is why I do not intend to stop for a minute my campaign to win at home and every other place where I am trampled on.

Can any revolutionary oppose such a line?

On the second, point, it should be obvious from all we have written so far, and from the kinds of demands specifically included in the program, that any struggle to improve the conditions of the masses of women can only be successful to the extent to which it attacks white supremacy. And on the other hand, there is no demand made in the interests of the masses of women which, if won, would not be a victory for Black people and all oppressed peoples.

Look at the Weatherman's reasoning:

(1) the struggle against white supremacy is not in the immediate interests of white workers; therefore, they cannot be won to it;

(2) the struggle against male supremacy is reactionary unless it involves a struggle against white supremacy;

(3) therefore, the struggle against male supremacy waged by white women, since it cannot entail an attack upon white supremacy, is reactionary!

Such "brilliant" revolutionaries may not need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows, but it seems they need a compass to stay out of the swamp. However, they are not alone; once again they find themselves in company with PLP, which also condemns the fight for women's equality as "divisive."

The Anti-Imperialist United Front

Should all the people of the world, including the people of the U.S., form a common front against U.S. imperialism? Should revolutionaries work to unite all who can be united in order to isolate and defeat the main enemy?

In our opinion, there has been a great deal of distortion from all quarters on the subject of the united front against U.S. imperialism. Some people have confused it with the alliance of different anti-imperialist classes that make up a national liberation movement, the first stage of the socialist revolution in a dependent nation. Some people have made the mistake of confounding a tactic and a strategy. For our part, we support the line put forward as point number 11 in the 13 point statement published as an appendix to RYM II. That point reads:

Because the dominance of the big monopolies has brought them into conflict with other strata of society besides the proletariat, it becomes possible for the proletariat to rally around itself masses of non-proletarians in a united front against the imperialists. Such a united front depends for its achievement on the independent, class-conscious actions of the proletariat, winning over or neutralizing large numbers in the middle sectors and isolating the most reactionary, dangerous, and powerful elements of finance capital. The key principles of the united front against U.S. imperialism for which all revolutionaries must fight, are four: (a) the leading role of the proletariat within the united front; (b) the willingness to unite all who can be united against the monopolies; (c) the central role of the fight against white supremacy in the building of a united front; and (d) the fight against anti-communism. It must be emphasized that the united front against imperialism, can only be a tactical orientation of the proletariat, not a strategy, since

strategy means a plan for the basic realignment of class forces, which in the U.S. as a whole can only mean the undivided power of the proletariat, acting in the interests of the overwhelming masses of the world's people.

Part V of Weatherman paper begins with a generally correct paragraph exposing the fallacy of a “two-stage” revolution in an imperialist state, the U.S. in particular. From that generally correct stand, the writers plunge immediately into error.

Along with no two stages, there is no united front with the petit bourgeoisie, because its interests as a class aren't for replacing imperialism with socialism.

We would like to ask the Weathermen—why is it necessary to counterpose the strategy of the proletariat, which can only be for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the tactics of the proletariat, which can take a number of different lines, the main one being the effort to rally the widest sectors of the population in a united front whose spearhead is aimed at the predatory fascist policies of U.S. monopoly capital?

And then:

Someone not for revolution is not for actually defeating imperialism either, but we still can and should unite with them on particular issues. But this is not a united front (and we should not put forth some joint ‘united front’ line with them to the exclusion of our own politics) because their class position isn't against imperialism as a system. In China, or Vietnam, the petit bourgeoisie's class interests could be for actually winning against imperialism; this was because their task was driving it out, not overthrowing its whole existence. For us here, ‘throwing it out’ means not from one colony, but all of them, throwing it out of the world, the same thing as overthrowing it.

Is it not true that the military adventures, monopoly price-fixing, tax swindles and other actions of the finance-capital oligarchy have begun to create real resistance among vast numbers of the middle sectors, and including perhaps even some elements in the bourgeoisie itself who see themselves being pushed out and their own profits being threatened by such measures? We believe that in the epoch of imperialism it is the duty of the revolutionary proletariat, by advancing partial slogans, to come forward as the defender of all those who are suffering at the hands of the monopolist sharks. Such a course would serve to isolate the finance-capital oligarchs who are the main pillar of bourgeois rule as a whole, and would further serve to educate the politically backward strata of the proletariat itself, who would see, in practice, the real role of different classes and strata in society.

It is not at all a question, as Weatherman would have us believe, of subordinating the independent policies of the proletariat: the independent role of the proletariat is the key to the achievement of the united front, while, on the other hand, the building of a united front will give the proletariat more room to operate, more room to put forward its own policies. A real united front is the implementation of Lenin's behest to be “cunning as a snake and ferocious as a tiger.”

Supporters of the Weatherman position—we think you should re-examine your stand on this question, for here too they are in embarrassing accord with PLP, which also condemns the united front, labeling it “revisionist.”

The Marxist-Leninist Party

Does the proletariat need a party to represent its class interests? How is such a party to be built?

The main obstacle to the building of a Marxist-Leninist party is the worship of spontaneity. This worship takes two forms: on one hand, there is the belief that class consciousness grows spontaneously out of the day-to-day struggles of working people, the inability to see the need to carry the ideological struggle to the proletariat, the underestimation of the importance of imparting class consciousness to the proletariat which is everywhere dominated by bourgeois ideas in a “semiconscious,” partially-expressed form; on the other hand, there is the belief that the proletariat cannot be won to the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the failure to wage the mass struggle for proletarian ideology, the attempt to substitute the disciplined, organized actions of a minority for the conscious actions of the proletariat as a class.

We believe that the line of PLP represents a deviation toward the first error; we think that this essay up to now has shown that Weatherman is deviating in the direction of the second error. Look at the section entitled “The Need for a Revolutionary Party.” The whole emphasis of the section is organizational, that is, the need to select out a body of leaders, to create the ability to work clandestinely, to form collectives of revolutionary individuals, etc. Even when the need for revolutionary theory is discussed, it is always from the viewpoint of theory for the party, not for the masses.

How could it be otherwise with a “theory” that openly declares that the fight against white supremacy is not in the immediate interests of the masses of white workers, that scuttles the fight for the equality of women, that substitutes calls for “socialism” for the patient work of winning the masses through intermediate struggles of a united front character, that boldly emblazons on its banner the empiricist, existential, anti-theoretical slogan—“You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows”!

A party in the U.S. cannot be built by a few “geniuses” coming together. It can only be formed by applying the general line of proletarian theory, embodied in the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, to the specific conditions of the U.S. through the involvement of a number of advanced workers in the application of theory and the summing up of experiences. This formula means that it is necessary to take the ideological struggle to the proletariat as a class, with the emphasis on winning over the advanced sectors, which cannot be done in isolation from the intermediate and backward sectors of the working class.

The fact that in the entire Weatherman document, which is not a single-point but a full statement of policy, program and line, the fact that there is not one single word about the need to fight for proletarian ideology among the masses of workers shows that Weatherman’s pretensions to party building are deserving of no more credence than the economist, opportunist and social-chauvinist ravings of PLP.

There are several other areas of disagreement we have with Weatherman, such as the “class analysis” put forward, the question of where do the contradictions of capitalism manifest themselves, and so on. We do not intend to deal with these points now. This will be an extended discussion, and there is no hurry.

We should like to deal briefly, however, with the roots of Weatherman’s errors, and their identity with earlier wrong tendencies in SDS. Specifically, we believe that the Weatherman viewpoint represents a restatement of the now discredited “new working class” argument.

Why do we make such an apparently rash statement? NWC theories denied the operation of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism; so does Weatherman. NWC theories regarded the proletariat as coopted into the system; so does Weatherman when it says that the selfish privileges given to one or another sector of the workers are in their class interests. NWC theories said that the most basic struggles took place around decaying institutions; so does Weatherman. NWC regarded

what they called the lumpen-proletariat as the main body of the revolutionary forces; Weatherman redefines the concept of class to achieve the same end. NWC regarded the technical elite as the vanguard; Weatherman regards “revolutionaries” detached from class interests as the vanguard.

How can it be that two lines so apparently divergent as Weatherman and “new working class” can prove to have an essential identity? The reason is that in a society which has reached such a high stage of capitalism as the U.S., there are only two ideologies, bourgeois and proletarian.

Bourgeois ideology, of whatever variant, takes for its starting point the commonality of interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Proletarian ideology takes for its starting point their irreconcilability of interests.

From the very first statement of Weatherman, that, “The relative affluence existing in the United States is directly dependent upon the labor and natural resources of the Vietnamese, the Angolans, the Bolivians and the rest of the peoples of the Third World,” from that very first statement (which is an echo of the essential argument of the Bourgeoisie) the writers fall into the trap of the commonality of interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and thereby stamp themselves as a variant of bourgeois ideology—the most radical variant so far, perhaps—but bourgeois nonetheless. From that fundamental error, everything else flows smoothly and inexorably.

A Departure From Dialectics

On a more fundamental level than the political, on the level of philosophy, the roots of Weatherman’s errors lie in the writers’ departure from dialectics.

Mao Tse Tung wrote, in *On Contradiction*:

The basic cause of the development of things does not lie outside but inside them, in their internal contradictions. The movement and development of things arise because of the presence of such contradictions inside all things. This contradiction within a thing is the basic cause of its development, while the interconnection of a thing with, and its interaction upon, other things are the secondary causes of its development. Thus materialist dialectics forcefully combats the theory of external causes of propulsion by metaphysical mechanistic materialism and vulgar evolutionism.

We think that Weatherman, in attributing the major impetus for change within the U.S. to developments outside of the U.S., in declaring that the masses of U.S. workers do not now stand in irreconcilable opposition to the U.S. bourgeoisie but will only do so as the successes of the mainly external national liberation movements forces the U.S. bourgeoisie to reduce the privileges of the U.S. proletariat, in saying these things the Weatherman have slipped from dialectics to metaphysics, and are therefore profoundly wrong.

There are a number of vital questions of theory and the application of theory to U.S. conditions which are yet unanswered, or to which only the most elementary answers have been given. Considering the overall weakness of the proletarian movement in the US, it is likely that our weakest aspect is our ignorance—ignorance of U.S. history, of the actual conditions in our country, of the inter-relation between various social forces, and of the road along which we must move in order to achieve our goal.

Questions of the specific relation of the national liberation struggles within the U.S. to the class struggle, an examination of the ways white supremacy has functioned to retard the growth of class consciousness, the revolutionary potential of the fight for women’s liberation, the place of the youth movement in the class struggle, the role of labor unions, the operation of state-monopoly capitalism,

the economic cycle—these and a hundred other questions will have to be scientifically posed and answered in the course of carrying out struggle. This process has barely begun.

In order to answer these questions, we must take Marxism-Leninism, the universally applicable science of the proletariat, as our point of departure. Every strategic and programmatic document must be gauged against the fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

The Weatherman paper does not meet the test. We think the solution does not lie in “improving” it, polishing it with minor amendments. The solution lies in scrapping it altogether, and starting our investigation by recognizing the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, which was expressed in clear tones at the beginning of the century by the Wobblies: “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.”

Lastly, we should like to say that, in spite of our profound, total and unresolvable disagreements with the Weatherman paper, we by no means regard it as a disservice to the movement. Things become strong by struggling against their opposites, and revolutionary theory will develop in the U.S. by struggle against counter revolutionary theory. In this sense, the Weatherman paper is an excellent basis against which to develop revolutionary theory. For that reason, all revolutionaries should be happy that it was written and published.

Week 12

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers

The most tumultuous urban rebellion of the sixties in the United States was the one that took place in Detroit in 1967. The center of the vast automobile manufacturing network that employed one in six Americans, Detroit was a strategic target for labor activity. However, both the declining militancy of the existing union movement (including, notably, the United Auto Workers) and pervasive racism made organizing within existing channels difficult.

A group of radicals influenced by James Boggs' ideas and grouped around the publication *Inner City Voice* led a wildcat strike in 1968 against a speed up at a Dodge auto plant. This Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) brandished a Marxist perspective and would continue to address workers' grievances through direct, militant action over the next few years. RUMs at other plants began to form and were grouped into a loose structure called the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW). Ultimately, however, the fuzzy lines of demarcation and responsibility between the RUMs and other organizations that its members were involved in would formally end the LRBW in 1971. Some members of the LRBW went on to join the Communist League.

James Forman was an influential member of SNCC who joined the LRBW. He believed the Black Workers Congress (BWC), which was initially conceived as a way to replicate RUMs outside of Detroit, would preside over the LRBW, while others thought the reverse should hold. This dispute eventually destroyed the LRBW.

Ken Cockrel was a lawyer who served on LRBW's Executive Committee. His boast that no member of the LRBW was ever convicted contrasted the LRBW's strategy, tactics and style with the Black Panthers'. The LRBW kept a low profile within its factories and avoided conflict with authorities when strategically unnecessary.

12.1 James Forman, Liberation Will Come from a Black Thing (1967)

SDS introduction: James Forman's speech was given at the Western Regional Black Youth Conference, held in Los Angeles, California on Nov. 23, 1967. In this speech, Forman pushes for a political

understanding of the fight against racism, of the fight for black liberation as self-defense against U.S. imperialism.

The self-defense of a people against attack is not a right, but a necessity. From the time of the Geneva Agreements in 1954 until 1959–60, the policy of Vietnamese nationalists was to engage in peaceful legal struggle against the Diem government and its U.S. advisors. More Vietnamese were killed between 1957–59 than during the nine years of the war against the French. The beginning of armed resistance in 1959 was a necessary response to the violence of repression.

And in this country, approximately 6,500 black people have been lynched since the Civil War. These lynchings have sometimes been by rope, more often by the “legal” policeman’s bullet. Racism has been used to justify these murders, just as it is used to justify the genocidal war being waged against the Vietnamese.

Racism and U.S. imperialism, inextricably entwined, are being assaulted by liberation fighters all over the world. In this worldwide struggle between revolution and counterrevolution, there can be no “innocent bystanders.” As Frantz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Yes; everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good.

“No one has clean hands; there are no innocents and no onlookers. We all have dirty hands... Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.”

The fight against racism is not the struggle of black people, it is ours. And the battle has been joined.

Black Liberation

The only correct way to discuss those words is from a historical context. Too often we look at an event, a situation, a slogan, a life history, a rebellion, a revolution...and assume that its present characteristics have always been its past. For instance in Vietnam we see a heroic struggle occurring in which the Vietnamese people are using revolutionary armed force to repel their aggressors. Sometimes we fail to understand that the South Vietnamese had a policy of self-defense for at least four years—from 1955 to 1960—before they engaged in offensive armed struggle to liberate their country from the oppression of the Diem Regime and its United States backers. When the student movement started in February 1960, many of the activists thought they had begun the black revolution. Many of us failed to understand the historical conditions which produced us and the actions we were taking against segregation in this country, especially in the Deep South.

While it is beyond the limits of my time to go into a long discussion of the history of our people, it is absolutely essential to see our history as one of resistance. Our ancestors began to resist the enforced slavery long before they left the shores of Africa. The captured African did not voluntarily go to the shores of Africa and willingly board the slave ships that brought our forefathers to this alien land. They resisted in Africa.

They resisted the moment they were wrenched from the shores of Africa.

They resisted on the high seas.

They resisted in Virginia, Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina—wherever they were forced to work as slaves building the so-called great white civilization of the United States and the Western World.

We resist today!

We must continue at every step of the ladder of our liberation to view those previous rungs as battles for which we fought; as battles for which we paid dearly in our blood, sacrifice, and toil; as battles which we could not win unless those below were willing to resist, dead though they may

be, unknown, unsung. Many of those names no one knew; but they resisted and they died in the liberation struggle.

Those of us who live are obligated to keep the unknown martyrs before our consciousness and to dedicate ourselves to more resistance until there are no more rungs of resistance, no more ladders of resistance, but only the ravines, the fields, the mountains, the Inner Cities and streets of revolution.

The opposite of resistance is accommodation. It is certainly true today that many of our people are accommodating themselves to the system of capitalism in which we live. Personally, I do not view much of the history of our people as accommodation. There may have been a few who accommodated themselves to slavery, a few informers here and there. Even during the period of Reconstruction, throughout the Twentieth Century, in the efforts of the Niagara Movement, the Garvey Movement, and most of the actions of the civil-rights movement must be seen, from my viewpoint, the history of a people who were and are resisting a form of neo-slavery that existed after the so-called Emancipation Proclamation.

It is true that much of the visible leadership in the past has often been characterized as accommodating leadership, but I am not discussing just the visible leadership. Leaving aside judgments on certain visible symbols of leadership, I am talking about the masses of our people. The masses of black people have never accommodated themselves to the United States.

And it is among the masses that our youth may work.

Only from the masses of black people will there come revolutionary leadership, a leadership that will not accommodate itself, that will continue to resist as our ancestors resisted, a leadership that will not mind dying for independence and freedom not only for blacks but for all oppressed.

For those of us who consider ourselves freedom fighters it is imperative that we view our history in this manner—a history of resistance, not of accommodation. It is imperative that we realize that our culture and our people have been able to resist to survive and to make it possible for us to deal more death blows to our oppressors.

Why have I devoted so much time to interpreting our history as one of resistance? There are several reasons. First, I assume all of us have certain factual knowledge of our history—and those of us who do not will soon acquire that. But I am convinced that many of us have not interpreted those facts correctly. Certainly my interpretation is open to debate, a debate in which I am prepared to engage, and defend. Second, I am convinced that a faulty interpretation of our history is often damaging to our cause. For instance, Johnny Wilson, a member of SNCC, recently attended a conference in Czechoslovakia where there were many representatives of the National Liberation Front and the government of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam. The Vietnamese there assembled, people who are fighting and dying daily by the hundreds for their freedom, asked the American representatives to sing the song “We shall overcome.” They stated that they had sung the song often, for it gave them inspiration and much hope. One of the brothers from Newark attending the conference—who may or may not have participated actively in the rebellion—jumped up and said: “No. We don’t sing that song. The people that sang that song were crazy. They were non-violent, and we ain’t.” The Vietnamese were stunned. They are not crazy for singing it, and I do not think all of us who sang it were crazy. People do not sing it today for many reasons. But the brother from Newark was only in Prague because there was a historical relationship between his presence there and the manner in which he got there. I am well aware that my presence here is due to many factors, but if it had not been for the people who sang “We Shall Overcome,” there is no question in my mind that I would not be here today.

To view our history as one of resistance is to recognize more clearly the colonial relationship that we have with the United States. Traditionally, when one thinks of colonialism images of foreign

powers occupying another land and subjecting our people are the kinds of mental pictures we frame. But our own colonial status is unique in that we are the descendants of people enslaved and transplanted in a colonial status. The rhetoric, the false claims, the meaningless phrases—all these try to tell us that we are citizens; we are Americans. I will not dwell on the absurdity of that, for we all know too well that the internal rebellions in this country, led by Watts, would not occur if in fact that was the case.

The serious conditions in which we find ourselves as a people demand that we begin talking more of the colonized and the colonizer. If we begin to use those terms more and to describe their inner workings, especially the economic base on which colonialism is founded and the industrial military complex of Western countries which sustain it, we shall definitely advance the cause of our liberation. Any colonized people are exploited people. But all exploited people are not colonized. That is to say, we can have in certain situations, as we do in many countries around the world, people exploited because of their class positions in society. Within the United States there are many exploited whites, but they are not colonized. In most instances they form a part of the colonizing class. When Fanon says we must stretch a Marxist analysis when we look at colonial situations he is referring to this condition, even though he didn't explain it.

Unless my historical understanding is incorrect, the colonial relationships since the Fifteenth Century—with the exception of Ireland—have all involved white Europeans and their American white descendants colonizing the darker people of the world. Therefore race is intimately involved in the colonizing experience. My own experience in various situations with my brothers and sisters has led me to conclude that it is necessary to view ourselves in these terms—the colonized and the colonizer—if we are not to fall into the trap of seeing the causes of our problems as merely skin causes, black skin versus white skin. A purely skin analysis of the cause of and continuing responsibility for our condition not only is theoretically incorrect, but, because it is theoretically incorrect, will lead to some serious mistakes in programming.

When we view our colonial situation in the United States, it is easy, it is emotionally satisfying at times, and it may be the first step toward nationalism, which we must promote to view the cause as one solely of skin. But if our analysis remains there and we do not work to broaden our understanding we are headed for a trick, a frustrating pit of despair.

A purely skin analysis makes it very difficult to guard against reactionary nationalism, for instance. Dr. Hasting Banda of Malawi would undoubtedly and without question tell you that he is an African nationalist. A man with black skin—yet he visits Taiwan, tells us the United States is right for fighting in Vietnam, and is willing to open diplomatic relations with South Africa.

There is an aspect of our colonial experience, however, which we often fail to examine, to look at—to determine its meaning for today and for tomorrow—and which may help to shed light on the skin analysis. Hence, too often we overlook that our enslavement involved a duality—an alliance by some of our African ancestors with white slavers. The ruling classes of many African territories and nations, the African visitors in many skirmishes and wars with other Africans, co-operated with the white ruling classes and their merchants to get us to this country. This examination should in no way imply that I do not place the greatest burden upon Western Civilization for our enslavement, but I do not think it does much good to overlook that many Africans were willing to make a profit off our bodies.

Today in many instances we see similar situations—exploitation of blacks by blacks, especially in Africa (and I could call a list of countries) and here in the United States. This exploitation has its own historical roots, and any effective programming which we will do in the future must be aware of this current fact from its historical and class basis. A more profound analysis of this problem—the

co-operation of the ruling-class Africans with the slaving white merchants—has been made by a young historian, Walter Rodney, whom we met in Tanzania.

Brothers and Sisters, bold analysis of the last six or seven paragraphs of this paper brings into sharp focus three ways of looking at the fundamental causes of our problems: (1) We can take the position that says we are exploited solely because of our skin color. This I call the skin analysis. (2) We can take a second position that says our exploitation is due solely to our class position in this society. This I call the exclusive class analysis. (3) We can take a third position that says our exploitation results from both class positions and race. Given all that I said, it is obvious that I hold to the third position.

The absolute necessity for me to raise this as a discussion item arises from my own experience within the Movement. Once during a discussion with one of my brothers, I used the word Marxian. He jumped up and pounded on the table and yelled: “But, Motherfucker, Marx was not a black. He was not black, do you hear! He was a white writer.”

Just recently we have come through some painful discussions in the New York area and have seen some very deep tensions in the black community resulting from conflicts on this issue. And this is very important, because one brother was kidnapped because of this issue, and three other brothers had to go get him and almost got killed in the process—so the situation is very pressing on my consciousness. For instance, the march on the Pentagon was advertised in *Inner City Voice*, a revolutionary journal that started in Detroit after the rebellion. This journal called upon blacks to join the confrontation at the Pentagon. In the meantime there had been all sorts of discussion among some black militants on the East Coast about what should be the relationship of black people to the March. The brothers and sisters from Detroit did not know about these conflicts and therefore came to Washington to participate in the demonstration. They wanted the National Liberation Front, so they said, to know that there were blacks opposed to the War and ready to confront the warmakers. However at the March they were torn asunder because there were brothers and sisters who began to say: Black people are not relating to that thing. That’s a white thing. And one so-called spokesman for a Black Power committee said: Black people are interested in their communities... And I’m still quoting him... The whites started this war, so let them end it. We’re tired of marching. We’re headed for a black thing, and that thing don’t include marching on the Pentagon. We’re concerned, this Black Power spokesman concluded, about the cutbacks in the Poverty program. We want jobs and better communities.

Within SNCC today, we are discussing revolutionary Black Power as opposed to reactionary Black Power, for we have seen instance after instance in which conservative forces have tried to explain away or excuse the revolutionary aspect of Black Power. But an understanding of what is meant by revolutionary Black Power hinges on how one sees the fundamental causes of our condition today. From this analysis will flow many things and many decisions and many ways of solving our problems.

Within the concept of the colonized we must begin to speak more of the dispossessed—those who do not have. This is important, for it determines where alliances are made. The dispossessed unite with the dispossessed. It must be clearly understood that the nature of the colonial experience is that racism is inherent in all its manifestations. Even if the dispossessed unite with the dispossessed or the exploiters who are responsible for the colonizing are kicked out, the legacy of racism and remnants of the colonial experience remain and must be uprooted. The Chinese are saying in part through their cultural revolution that even though one eliminates the structural forms of capitalism, there are capitalistic ideas and thoughts that still remain and must be combatted.

As Chairman H. Rap Brown stated to the Black Caucus at the National Conference on New

Politics, the dispossessed in the United States are the people of African descent, the Puerto Ricans, the Mexican Americans, and many poor whites. We are the vanguard of that group because of our historical oppression and the racism inherent in it. Whether we will live up to our historical role and lead forward that revolution remains to be seen.

It is our job to go forth from this conference using whatever means necessary to liberate ourselves and other oppressed people, not only in the United States but throughout the world. In order to do this we must wage an unrelenting struggle against racism and exploitation of man. We must work, not for ourselves, but for the unborn generations that will carry humanity and our people to new heights, to a world without racism, to a world of no more resistance, but only a community of concern. For this world we must be prepared to fight and to die. And we must believe that we will win. We must believe that our fight and our deaths are not in vain.

How do we organize and what do we organize? One year ago, within SNCC, we called for the formation of all-inclusive political units, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. We called for the formation of the Freedom Organizations. You can choose any name, so long as it is an independent political organization that will service the needs—the total needs—of the people. These organizations must build within themselves committees to deal with the economic, political, social, cultural, educational, and welfare needs of the people. They must have youth organizations, and it is up to us—those of us with the commitment to total change, with energy and time to go to the masses and organize them—to do this work. One may well speak of revolution, but unless there is day-to-day, block-to-block, city-to-city, and nationwide organizing there can be no fundamental changes in our lives. Those of us who consider ourselves politically hip, those of us who feel we have a consciousness, those of us who are prepared to take care of business—must recognize that unless there is mass participation by black people in efforts to bring about revolution, then that revolution will not occur. No matter how long we talk about it, rhetoric is not a substitute for work.

In fact, brothers and sisters, I do not mean to sound pretentious or presumptuous, or to degrade anyone's effort—but the reality is that there are so few people willing to do work among the masses of the people. That is why this conference is very important and we should all thank the organizers, for they have been willing to work, to mimeograph, to arrange meetings, to stay up late in order to organize. Blueprints for revolution have been around for a long time. And everyone that I have read has stressed the importance of active political organization. And in fact, man, you got to work in order to do any of that...

And as we work in the Inner Cities and in the rural areas we must be prepared to guard against the sabotaging of our work, the infiltration of our cadres by the FBI and the CIA and local police agents. We must not allow the McClellan Committee, the Eastland Committee, the House Un-American Activities Committee to isolate SNCC, to destroy the Panthers, to arrest and imprison other militants because the Man is afraid of RAM. We have to build visible defense committees and link all the militants in some confederation so that it will be more difficult to isolate and destroy any of us. Inner City newspapers must be established to provide alternative methods of communication, for all of us know that the Man is not going to print anything but negative news of our movement.

Finally, we must protect our brothers and sisters; and even as I say this there are some brothers in jail about whom there is not much active concern because we have allowed our own internal contradictions to divide us. This brother may not have done that the way some brothers would have done it. Therefore he is left isolated. And to the degree that this occurs all of us stand to be destroyed. Granted that the forward thrust of the Movement cannot be stopped, it can be halted and set back. Time and energy, the two most important assets we have, can be uselessly spent if we are not immediately responsive to crises or ready to take legal action in behalf of brothers that

are arrested. This last point cannot be over-stressed, for the Man is picking up brothers all over the country and sometimes there is no response to their arrest. This is not the case with respect to visible symbols of leadership. Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and so forth and so on, and maybe even myself. It must also be true for the man behind the mimeograph sheet or the one who is taking care of business.

In other words we have to work to eliminate the class bias that is often apparent in many of our organizations and efforts.

And now, brothers and sisters, I must depart from the written script. I had some other notes, but they are not here.

As I said I am very tired and I have had to read this paper because I do not trust myself, my ability to be very coherent without leaning on the paper. I agree that it is very important that we begin to write down our thoughts. We must get away from the oral tradition. It is extremely hard to pass on to future generations ideas and information if they are all in the oral tradition. For six years, as I served as the Executive Secretary, I would make speeches and none of them would be written. That means that if something had happened to me, if I had been annihilated in battle, then whatever ideas I may have had would not have been transmitted, for they would have been lost. That is the problem with the period of Reconstruction in our history. There were many strong black cats who were sheriffs and who were other lawmakers, but there is not much, if anything, written by them; nothing that we can read—and many of them could write. As a people we have the oral tradition, and they employed that; but for the future generation we must write. We must write from our own experience, for only we have all the insights into what we mean.

However, now I want to talk about five points, or several things that we must do to counteract possible reactions and attempts to destroy us by the Man. The first thing we must do is stop all this loose talk and keep our mouths shut. Because cats are sitting around doing loose talk and the Man is gathering information and intelligence. The Man is piecing together all this loose talk and making up conspiracy charges and what-have-you. This very well may have been what happened in New York, because there were police informers involved in the charges. I don't know—but certainly they were framed.

I know this is what happened with the Statue of Liberty case, because Policeman Woods was the man who conceived of the idea, pushed the brothers into it by making them feel guilty because they weren't militant enough, arranged for the dynamite, took a brother to pick it up, and then testified against them in court. The result was: They served three and a half years, and Woods is still free. That is a fact, and you'd better read about the Statue of Liberty case before you go out every night talking about the revolution with anyone and everyone.

The second thing deals with these research programs. I have been gathering some intelligence on them, and I have discovered in one city, Detroit, that three researchers with some money talked to over two hundred and fifty brothers who discussed details of the rebellion, plans and stages for future activity. The researchers have taken the material back to the foundation. What do you think they have done with it?

Obviously the Man has it. This has happened all over this country. Immediately during and after the rebellion you see brothers talking to television cameras saying what they're going to do soon as the National Guard pulls out. They are just selling wolf tickets and giving out information on themselves. The Man has an intelligence file on everybody. And he has gotten that information in part because we have been running off at the mouth co-operating with some research project about a rebellion. You don't make a rebellion and describe it until after it's all over.

The third question deals with rumor-mongering. For the last two or three weeks I've gotten

telephone calls from people saying that this person or that person is “the Man,” and when I check it out there doesn’t seem to be much basis in fact for the kinds of rumors that are spreading. Such evidence as “This chick looks funny!” or “She talks funny!” I am not saying that there are no informers. There are enough FBI and CIA agents, even in this room, that we don’t know about. We do not need to make the situation worse by spreading rumors that have no foundation based on facts and reality. One must check out these things before fingering a person.

What is the danger of rumor-spreading? The danger is that the Man uses this as a divisive technique. He puts the finger on cats. He wants to create suspicion, he wants to divide and conquer, he wants to put the finger on cats by spreading ill-founded rumors. This has happened all over Africa. Liberation fighters have had to combat suspicions placed on them by the fingers of the Man. And if we give in to this type of rumor-mongering we are contributing to that type of activity.

The fourth thing is the negative press which we’ve talked about. We cannot expect favorable coverage of our activities. We must have our own papers.

The fifth thing which is extremely important deals with splitting activities. As Brother Snelling said, “Everybody’s black.” Blackness is granted. It may not be sufficient, but certainly it is granted. But the reality is that the Man is wearing Afros today; he’s wearing dashikis. You dig it? He’s wearing them. I’ve seen them in the crowds. When we were in Philadelphia on the so-called dynamite frame-up case, a cop, whom we were suspicious of and had not seen for three weeks, came around in a dashiki and a turban identifying with the masses. The brothers easily identify with me because I’m wearing a buba, the other brother is over there clean and taking care of business. See, we’re in a trick. We have to watch out for this kind of activity because it’s happening all over. That is why the Man has so much intelligence in Harlem, because he has gone in there on that kind of basis and he’s doing it everywhere else and we have to watch out.

The kidnapping in Washington was supposed to have happened because the brother wasn’t black enough, and some of the same people involved in the kidnapping put out a newsletter charging that there was an internal Communist conspiracy to kill black people at the demonstration at the Pentagon. It was admitted in the newsletter that there had been conversations with the Police Department, admitted there had been discussions about how this organization could keep down a rebellion in DC. Also in the newsletter there were words to the effect that Robert Williams, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown were associating with governments that bring greater repression on black people in the United States. And yet this organization called itself the Black Man’s Volunteer Liberation Army. I am not even saying that those who put out that newsletter were the Man. Maybe they didn’t put it out, but they didn’t disown it. It is obvious, however, that the effect was the same. The Black Community in Washington was terrorized. They did not know what was going to happen that day. Certainly they did not want to be involved in gunfights between blacks. When we fight like this among ourselves, only the Man stands to gain. He got his peace and quiet in Washington at our expense. Black people were split, and we must realize that blackness is going to be used more and more as a splitting tactic.

Remember, this Government will use any means to control the upsurge of insurrectional activity coming from the Inner City, and we must not help him. This happened here at this conference. Those cats out there were trying to terrorize this conference. They had said they were going to do that. But they were stopped. When we have to fight among ourselves we don’t have time to deal with the Man. We just do not have the time to fight among ourselves. The masses get bewildered and they are not willing to go out on the streets if they feel they have to fight with brothers. It is difficult enough to get any of us out on the streets.

It’s bad enough to have to deal with a hunky. Nobody wants to shoot a brother. In Washington

the people who went to see about the newsletter and other matters did not want to shoot those cats. As a matter of fact it is my contention that the Man was waiting for them to start something.

There is no better help we can give to the Man than to fight among ourselves. In Washington it was a perfect set-up. If the brothers had mounted the stairs to take care of business, they could easily have been blown away...

Brothers and sisters, I am going to close. But I want to emphasize that we have brought a lot of information in papers to this conference and we urge you to go back to your campuses and get this material distributed.

The point is that we want the material read. Now you are hip enough to get all of these Afro-American organizations started on your campuses. And I know not many of you on the West Coast go to all-black schools. There aren't any. So you ought to be hip enough to get those mimeograph machines rolling and copy this material. If you do this we can have a distribution of a hundred thousand copies of the material printed and distributed in a month...

It is imperative that we do this, but to do it we have got to work. I am old and I know that, but I also know that most cats are shucking and jiving. They simply do not want to do any work. They do not want to do any work. They want to sit down and talk about how black I am and how bad the Man is, but they won't even get up and raise a quarter for a black organization.

Now I ain't going into no cultural-historical analysis of that. It ain't nothing but out-and-out laziness.

Finally we must be concerned about the future. It is a trap to think in terms of our lives. Do you think that if those North Vietnamese soldiers were worried about their lives they would put up the fight they do at Dak To hill? If you are worried about your life it means that you are trying to protect your life. And if you are too worried, you are expressing again individualism. You are not concerned with the future. When you are not worried about your life and you are concerned about the future, about all the unborn Huey Newtons, all the unborn Emmett Tills and Charles Mack Parkers and Sammy Younges and Ruby Doris Robinsons, and when you are concerned about your own children—then you are ready to take care of business. And you ain't got no business having any children if you ain't gonna fight for their freedom.

Thank you.

12.2 League of Revolutionary Black Workers, General Program (Here's Where We're Coming From) (1970)

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is dedicated to waging a relentless struggle against racism, capitalism, and imperialism. We are struggling for the liberation of black people in the confines of the United States as well as to play a major revolutionary role in the liberation of all oppressed people in the world.

In U.S. society, a small class owns the basic means of production. There aren't any black people in this class, nor are the masses of whites; however, they are not in the same position as blacks.

Our black community is virtually a black working class, because of our relationship to the basic means of production. Black workers comprise the backbone of the productive process in this country. Since slavery, we have been the major producers of goods and services. In addition, we've produced goods under the most inhumane conditions. Our black community is comprised of industrial workers, social service workers, our gallant youth, and many ad hoc community groups.

The racist subordination of black people and black workers creates a privileged status for white people and white workers. While the imperialist oppression and exploitation of the world creates a privileged status for the people and workers of the U.S., the white labor movement has failed to deal with the worsening conditions of black workers and the key role of black workers in the economy and the working class. The white labor movement has turned its back on black worker problems such as less job security, speed-up, less pay, bad health (silicosis, in particular), the worst kind of jobs, and in most cases, exclusion from skilled trades.

These two systems of privilege become the basis for the aristocracy of white labor which gives white labor a huge stake in the imperialist system and renders white labor unable and unfit to lead the working class in the U.S.

United States society is racist, capitalist, and imperialist by nature. It is aggressively expansive, exploitative, and oppressive. The expansion of U.S. imperialism is primarily by means of worldwide financial penetration, backed up by a worldwide military regime. This gives a monopoly control of the resources, wealth and labor of the capitalist world to U.S. finance capital. They use the most barbarous methods of warfare and subversion to maintain its billions of dollars in profit.

U.S. imperialism supports every reactionary and fascist regime in the world by means of subversion, CIA assassinations, invasions, terror bombings, and criminal means of warfare. U.S. imperialism also resorts to nuclear blackmail, to intimidate the revolutionary peoples of the world. Imperialism faces its inevitable destruction as the national liberation struggles, currently focused in Southeast Asia, become worldwide. This involves the rest of Asia, including populous India, along with the emerging struggles in Latin America and the developing struggles in Africa. The workers and peoples of Europe are also drawn into the anti-imperialist struggle as the grip of U.S. imperialism loosens on Europe as the result of the struggles waged in the rest of the world.

The oppressive, imperialist nature of U.S. society is evidenced at home in the suppression of the black liberation struggle, workers' struggles, and anti-war struggles, in an increasingly militaristic fashion. One of the essential domestic props of U.S. imperialism is the white labor aristocracy which shares in the spoils of the plunder of the world and is based in the domestic subordination of black workers.

The white labor aristocracy collaborates with the U.S. imperialist government in its aggressive wars, its CIA subversion and supports its political line. It also colludes with monopoly corporations at home to allow speed-up and unsafe working conditions, inflation that outstrips any wage gains, leaves most workers unorganized, and supports the brutal subordination of black workers.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers emerged specifically, out of the failure of the white labor movement to address itself to the racist work conditions and to the general inhumane conditions of black people.

Our strength comes from the historical and heroic struggles of our people, our inspiration comes from the revolutionary upsurges of the international struggles, and our convictions are guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is a political organization. We relate to the total black community. Our actual practice involves us with industrial and service workers, youth, and several ad hoc groups; these categories make up the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Our duty is to plan the most feasible means to insure freedom and justice for the liberation of black people based on the concrete conditions we relate to. In addition, we have the task of training our people for leadership and other special capacities that make a viable organization. Most importantly, the direction of our organization is clear. We're not talking about dealing with a single issue as the only factor, nor are we talking about reforms in the system; but we are talking about the seizure

of state power.

It is clear to us that the development of our struggle based on concrete realities, dictates the need for black peoples' liberation political party. We state, unequivocally, that this must be a black Marxist-Leninist party, designed to liberate black people, dedicated to leading the workers' struggles in this country, and resolved to wage a relentless struggle against imperialism.

The League's program for building a black Marxist-Leninist party is as follows:

1. Organizing of black workers on the broadest possible scale into the League and its component parts.
2. Politicizing and educating the masses of black people to the nature of racism, capitalism, and imperialism, to further outline the solution to these problems in League programs and documents.
3. Supporting the efforts of our people to develop a broad economic base within the community to aid the revolutionary struggle.
4. Developing a broad based self-defense organization in the community.
5. Carrying on unceasing struggles on behalf of black workers and the total community.
6. Forming principled alliances and coalitions, on the broadest possible base, with other oppressed minorities, organizations, movements, and forces, black or white, which struggle against the evils of racism, capitalism and imperialism.

Our short-range objective is to secure state power with the control of the means of production in the hands of the workers under the leadership of the most advanced section of the working class, the black working-class vanguard.

Our long-range objective is to create a society free of race, sex, class, and national oppression, founded on the humanitarian principle of from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs...

Deep in the gloom

of the firefilled pit
 Where the Dodge rolls down the line,
 We challenge the doom
 of dying in shit
 While strangled by a swine...
 ... For hours and years
 we've sweated tears
 Trying to break our chain—
 But we broke our backs
 and died in packs
 To find our manhood slain...
 But now we stand—
 For DRUM's at hand
 To lead our Freedom fight,
 and from now til then
 we'll unite like men—
 For now we know our might—
 and damn the plantation
 and the whole Dodge nation
 For DRUM has dried our tears...
 and now as we die
 we've a different cry—
 For now we hold our spears!
 U.A.W. is scum—
 OUR THING IS DRUM!!!!

12.3 Ken Cockrel, From Repression to Revolution (1970)

The ensuing speech was made by Kenneth V. Cockrel at a repression conference held at Saint Joseph's Church, January 30, 1970, under the planning and sponsorship of Newsreel in Detroit. The speakers were Robert Williams, former President of the Republic of New Africa; Emory Douglas, Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party; and Attorney Kenneth V. Cockrel, Central Staff member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

A Need for Criticism

First of all, I think it is the obligation of persons who are part of political structures that they regard as serious political structures to engage in criticism in the spirit of fraternity and constructive concern for accomplishment of revolutionary objectives. So it is in that spirit that I would like to make some observations about the conduct of this meeting. That is to say that whoever set up the meeting (and I'm not sure that I can identify the persons who set up the meeting: Newsreel and perhaps some other individuals)—it seems to me ought to be the object of some criticism here, in terms of not making the maximum efficient utilization of the time, and the presence of the people here.

Now I don't want to compound that by going into an extenuated rap on the instances of attempts at incarceration that met with no success on the part of the Man in relation to members

of organizations that I am associated with. What I do want to say is that I don't understand what this program is all about. And I don't see what we can accomplish within the context of these protracted raps. And I think that there has been a breach of responsibility on the part of the people who had set up this meeting, and I think they ought to be criticized for that, and they ought to accept that criticism in the spirit in which it was intended. But if they don't, it's of no consequence either.

On a Revolutionary Need to Avoid Arrest

Now the position that the League of Revolutionary Black Workers takes in relation to the question of repression, since this is styled as a repression conference, is that there is but one means whereby a repression can be ended—and that is that the source of the repression (namely the oppressor) be destroyed.

We don't say that idly—we don't say that in the familiar sense of the nominal black militant who points his finger and roundly denounces honkeys, threatens to decimate the entire white population of the globe, and stands astride of what remains and proclaims the intrinsic beauty of blackness without relating to a concrete political program that will end oppression for all people in this world. We say in all seriousness that there is but one solution, and that is the destruction of the present state mechanism. The dismantling of the present state mechanism and the process whereby that dismantling will be brought about is that those who are seriously concerned about bringing about revolutionary change will move to seize state power, and what we suggest is the program of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

We say that for a very simple reason: We express and we feel total solidarity with all organizations which relate in a revolutionary way to conditions in this country. We are concerned about the extent to which they appear to be singled out to have repression visited upon them, and to the extent that it is possible we do all we can to support members of other organizations who find themselves subjected in a specific way to efforts at repression. For example we relate to and defend members of the Welfare Rights Organization, and indeed we've represented and related to members of the Black Panther Party here and elsewhere. But we feel that the principal responsibility of persons who are concerned about doing political work is that they first of all have an obligation to conduct themselves in such a way as to avoid incarceration, because the primary responsibility of revolutionaries is to be about the business of doing revolutionary work. And that means that your first responsibility is to do everything in your power to avoid becoming a defense organization.

Now there's a very interesting phenomenon that is operating here at this meeting. One of the things I was alluding to when I was engaged in my criticisms. See, the first phenomenon is that the MC or master of ceremonies (he who has the responsibility for this program) exhibits a kind of standard and fairly predictable sycophantic white response. That is, there are bloods speaking: I am reluctant to exercise any kind of control over the meeting because they are bloods. What is it? Is it that the cat's into a sycophantic thing? Is the cat just afraid that he's a blood? Or is it the position that any utterance that is ever made by any blood at any time is profoundly revolutionary in content and should not be in any way stifled, stymied, ordered, directed, or organized? We regard that as being a wholesale abdication of the responsibility to use one's time efficiently and use the time of other people efficiently. That's one observation we would want to make in connection with what we pick up on.

On Revolution in Detroit

The other thing that we pick up on at a meeting like this is that we got—you know: All the people here are basically local people, living in the metropolitan area, living in the city of Detroit. They're here to relate to what is called a repression conference, and the discussion with the exception of the discussion with Chairman Rob, who presently resides here and who is the object of an effort at extradition, relates to the political prisoners strung out all over the country. No discussion whatsoever with regard to what's going down in Detroit, what's going down in the metropolitan area, and how you relate to that. What does that say?

There are people here, for example, who are so unaware of what's going down in terms of serious effort at making revolutionary change in this city that when they seek external objects of admiration relating to what they perceive as revolutionary, they are forced to canvass the country and relate to, let us say, New Haven, Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Jackson, Fort Dix, the Milwaukee Fourteen, or whatever. We could go on: Texas Southern Five, Fort Jackson Eight, and so on. What they don't realize is that there are wholesale murders going down right here in the city of Detroit, wholesale murders indeed going down wherever you find yourself in this country. And that there are persons being killed who are not Panthers, that there are political organizations being subjected to attacks which are not Black Panther organizations.

We're not suggesting for a second that we have the remotest interest in having these things recognized just so that persons can say: "Well, there's been a fairly impressive list of shall-we-say Black Panther casualties." It then becomes the responsibility of other speakers to attempt to match it or perhaps top it. We're not relating to that. What we're relating to is the responsibility of politically serious people to recognize what's going down where they find themselves, because that's where they've got an obligation to do work. The reality is that you ain't in New Haven, that you can't do a damn thing for Bobby Seale, and you can't do a damn thing for the Panther 21. You can't do a damn thing for Fred Hampton and Mark Clark or for David Hilliard. But you can do something where you find yourself. That is, you can be going about the business of doing serious revolutionary work.

What do I mean by this? We say that the League of Revolutionary Black Workers is a serious organization with a serious program that has been consistently working over the years, and we point proudly not to the number of persons we have in jail, not to the number we have under indictment, but to the fact that we've functioned as a serious revolutionary organization for years, and we have not one man in jail. We point proudly to that fact. And we don't say that lightly, and we don't say that because we haven't been subjected to efforts to place us in jail. The last year, for example, has been replete with instances in which efforts have been made to put members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers' Central staff and member organizations in jail, and we will briefly canvass them for the information of those who are present.

Member of Central staff, General Gordon Baker Junior. You see, I think it is the responsibility of persons engaged in political work to select from their comrades their heroes, and while I have a profound respect for other men in other organizations who are brothers who are relating to the liberation struggle, my principal respect and my undying love and affection and my primary responsibility and obligation goes to my comrades in struggle. Persons with whom I am associated, those are my heroes, and those are the persons whose posters I have on my wall, my brothers.

And when we talk about my brothers, we understand that people in Detroit have been subjected to many efforts at incarceration and what is styled repression. But the significantly different factor when you begin to look at bloods who are operating in Detroit in all the different organizations, incidentally, is the fact that the Man does not have them anywhere in his jail. Be he RNA, be

he Panther, be he League, be he whatever. None of them ... none of them ... none of them are in jail. And that says something! What does that say? It says, Number One, that we've got a highly sophisticated black community in the city of Detroit, and that we relate in such a way as to make it impossible for the Man to frame us on jive chickenshit charges.

What do I mean by this? I mean a number of things. For example, there has been discussion; there has been discussion of people being charged with various kinds of conspiracies. But there is one thing that must be understood when you talk about people being charged with conspiracies. A conspiracy under law is defined as an agreement by two or more persons to perpetrate an unlawful act in an unlawful way. What does this mean? It means that the only way in which you could get busted for conspiracy is for one of the parties to the conspiracy to testify against you. That's the only way you can be cracked for a conspiracy. What does that mean? That means, then, that you must be a member of a political organization that is structured in such a way as to make it possible for your enemy to be in a position to sit on a witness stand and plausibly run to the Man that you are a part of a conspiracy to do some ridiculous thing.

We say that we do not relate to an organization that permits that kind of penetration, and that is one of the reasons why we have not yet been subjected to efforts at conspiracy. Although there has been one effort, that being the federal grand jury that convened in the city to investigate members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers who also are among the members of the steering Committee of the Black Economic Development Conference around the question of the Manifesto. People like Mike Hamlin, Chick Wooten, John Williams, Luke Tripp, and other members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers were subjected to the microscopic scrutiny of the federal bloodhounds. But we've been successful to date, in that no indictments have actually been returned.

John Watson, Central staff member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and former famous editor of the *South End* newspaper. John Watson was attacked. John Watson was sought to be prosecuted for allegedly beating the hell out of a white television newsman in the offices of the *South End* who came to interview him to get his opinion of a letter written by the president of Wayne State University charging his paper with being anti-Semitic. The *Detroit News* and other racist institutions in the city of Detroit, including jive liberal institutions such as the UAW, are opposed to Watson because he is a member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which organization was using the *South End* as an organizing vehicle. That is to say that after the *Inner City Voice* went out of business, we took over the *South End* with the explicit purpose in mind of using the resources of that printed organ to organize workers in the plants.

This was being done, and this represented the reason John Watson was attacked ... and you found such perverse things going down in the city as the racist *Detroit News* pretending not to be anti-Semitic and charging the bloods with being anti-Semitic. John Watson was certainly not anti-Semitic. John Watson was not sought to be prosecuted and charged for beating the hell out of a white newsman because he was alleged to have beaten up Joe Weaver. He was sought to be prosecuted and charged because he was a member of a revolutionary organization and he was making efficient revolutionary use of an available resource to replace the resources we no longer had. He took over the *South End*.

Subject to Attack

Ron March, Central Staff member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a founding member of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), which went on strike in 1968, closing down the Dodge Main plant, which related to the Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Movement (EL-

RUM), another member organization that closed down the Eldon Avenue assembly plant which makes axle housings, wheel wells, and so forth, and which if it had remained closed for another day would have paralyzed all assembly operations in all Chrysler plants in the country.

Injunctions were gotten naming members of the Central staff, naming Wooten, and naming General Baker, who was already on probation for allegedly carrying a concealed weapon during the 1966 so-called mini riot—the Kercheval street incident, as it is referred to by the press. The Man tried to bust him for violating an injunction by demonstrating against Chrysler Corporation, but was unsuccessful.

Ron March was charged—and we just completed his trial last month—he was charged with assault and battery on a police officer from the Tenth Precinct. They contended that Ronald March had nothing better to do when he got off work than get in a car and play bumper tag with some rollers, riding around in an unmarked squad car. We beat that. Myself, a member of the Central staff, had some problems in terms of being cited for contempt. Presently, being subjected to disbarment for allegedly characterizing, truthfully, the conduct of a judge—the racist honky fool.

We could go on interminably. Young brothers in Black Student Voice have been ejected from schools, Northern High School, for example Warren McAlpine, Rocquith Jackson. Young brother Darryl Mitchell, who has been kicked out of Highland Park High—just put on two year probation by a Circuit Court judge because he was distributing the Black student Voice in Highland Park High School.

We could go on and on with persons in organizations who have been sought out for attack. But we proudly proclaim to the world that all of our people who are members of our organization are still on the street and are still working. Moreover, we claim some responsibility for keeping members of other organizations on the street, where they can still work, like Hibbit.

We say that to say what? We say that to say a very simple thing, that conferences like these should, theoretically at least, be designed to produce something. That they shouldn't be designed to have persons' auditory nerves affected by sound waves travelling across the ether. We say that one of the things that ought to come out of such a political discussion is some understanding of what might be regarded as being a proper course of conduct to pursue if you're about the business of revolutionary change.

And that also deals with the question of oppression and repression, because repression is that which is to be logically expected by people who perceive you as a serious threat to the maintenance of conditions which are beneficial to them. You are to be honored when you find that you have become the object of an act of repression, because they would not for a second consider expending energy in directing it toward you if you did not, in some minimal way, at least, represent some threat to the way things are being done in this country. But the primary thing that can be done to prevent the occurrence of repression is for those of us of the oppressed classes to take over, to take power, to run every goddamn thing in this country, to run everything, this world—and certainly to start out by running everything in this city.

On the First Responsibility

So, we say the first responsibility of revolutionary organizations is to advance and practice a program that is designed to produce that one and only thing that can bring about an end to repression, and that is to take over power. How does the League of Revolutionary Black Workers relate to that? Just briefly, one of the things the League is indeed now involved in is organizing black workers, because the League proceeds from the analysis that it is necessary to humanize the world, to destroy

racism, monopoly capitalism, imperialism, and the whole institutional structure that is designed to maintain those three things. And we say that the point of greatest vulnerability of such a system is the point of production in the economic infrastructure of this system. So we say it makes sense to organize workers inside of the plants to precipitate the maximum dislocation and the maximum paralysis of the operation of the capitalist-imperialist machine. And that is why we organize the workers; and we do not simply define workers in the orthodox sense of those who toil laboriously with their hands over a lathe, or on the line, or in the trim shop, or in the frame plant, or in the foundry. We say that all people who don't own, rule, and benefit from decisions which are made by those who own and rule are workers.

That includes black students who are kicked out of schools, because these black students understand very clearly that the instruction they get is designed to produce fodder or fuel for the maintenance and the ongoing operation of this economic machine. We understand, in other words, that the productive relations of this society, the way in which it's organized in terms of its economy, determines how the educational structure is going to respond to it; and we understand that Northern and Northwestern High Schools, for example, have been deliberately structured in such a way as to produce potential unemployed men in periods of what are euphemistically referred to as recessions. Or, as the alternative, blacks can go to Saigon and die bravely for this country for which we have no reason whatsoever to die. That's what the present educational system is designed in such a way as to reflect, precisely what is ordered and required to be done by the economic system. And we see that relationship.

We say that all persons who are oppressed are workers. Whether they are permitted to participate productively in the operation of the society is determined not by whether or not they are workers, but by the fact that the men who control the means of production can organize these means in such a way as to make them unnecessary. And the way you solve that problem is to take over the total ownership and complete control of those devices of production, so that you have a society where you have not production for profit but production for the use of people in the society—production for the use of those who do the producing.

We're committed to the development of that kind of society. And we say that you do not develop that kind of society necessarily in the joint. But we understand there are instances in which cats will get cracked and there ain't nothing that they can do about it. They're going to get vamped on; they're going to be jammed up. We understand that. So we organize workers.

We also understand that the only way you end oppression is not by circulating petitions, not by writing letters to the attorney general, not by packing galleries in the state legislature, not by demanding a meeting on the third floor of Detroit Police Headquarters with whoever the black administrative assistant to the current police commissioner might be. We say that the only means whereby you can do this is to run the police department and run the city. So we say we're committed to running the city.

In order to do this we've got to develop a political machine. And when we say that we're interested in developing a political machine, we do not delude ourselves for a second into suggesting there's an alternative route to the destruction of the oppressor short of actually having to destroy him. We don't deceive ourselves. But we don't engage in any superficial discussions between the cats relating to electoral politics. That's bullshit. We relate to whatever's going to give us the power to create and widen the sphere within which we can function to bring about the destruction of this country.

We don't engage in bullshit arguments about "That's reformist, or that's not reformist." That which is reformist is simply that which is counter-revolutionary. What is not reformist or counter-

revolutionary is any action that conduces to the creation of a larger predisposition on the part of most people to view revolution as the only course of conduct available to end oppression. That's what we relate to—that's what we understand and see very clearly as being real.

One of the means whereby we begin to approach that is illustrated by the following: There has been a bill passed proposing to decentralize the Detroit School System—to create between 7 and 11 regions and to create local regional governing bodies that will relate in certain ways to the communities in which they find themselves and relate in other ways to what remains a so-called Central Board whose members will be increased, and so on. We have no illusions about decentralization and community control being the solution to the problem. We don't say that community control will end anything; but we do say, for example, that if that bill affords an opportunity to organize people around the concept of taking power, we will relate to the bill on that level. And in order to do that, the West Central Organization (which is headed by John Watson, a member of the League) has been relating to the holding of decentralization conferences and the attempt to develop a mechanism to organize a political machine so that we can take power by whatever means necessary.

We understand the need for a theoretical organ, for a revolutionary organ, for a newspaper for a means of communication; so we're making efforts to develop a high-quality press. We've had some problems on that score. We've printed the paper, and there are persons who have all kinds of views of the *Inner City Voice*; but nonetheless we keep on pushing it because we think it's a very serious revolutionary document. Apart from that the League runs journalism classes. The League is training young people to write. In addition to training young people to write, the League is in the process of establishing printing presses and printing shops and printing newspapers in four parts of this country. That's another program because we understand the need for an accurate and truthful dissemination of information.

What we say very simply is that yes, we can stand up and raise our hands and declaim mightily about the existence of Honkies, that Black is Beautiful, and we can hang bullets around our necks and wear all kinds of dashikies, but that's not going to bring about an ultimate end to oppression. What really is going to bring about an end to oppression is doing very serious and very hard work over a fairly protracted period of time that is designed to increase the likelihood of the people's taking power. And we say that the League represents that kind of an organization and that it's important to talk about the League in that connection at what is styled a repression conference, because we say that the only means of ending that repression is to take power over that system you find yourself in. And that's how we relate to repression.

Week 13

Black Feminism

The Second Wave Feminism of the sixties and seventies developed largely in reaction to the sexism of the male New Left. Nationalist and anti-revisionist politics also tended to relegate women to a supporting role. Black Panther Rufus Walls' comments about "pussy power" at the 1969 SDS convention typified these attitudes. Black feminists needed to beat against the current of male chauvinism, a predominately white feminism that often overlooked the struggle of Black women, and oppressive government policies.

Frances M. Beal was active in the NAACP and a founding member of the SNCC Black Women's Liberation Committee, which evolved into the Third World Women's Alliance. In her piece she references the Puerto Rican sterilization program, a controversial birth control program which left a large percentage of the women on the island infertile.

Angela Davis is a former Communist Party member who had close ties to the Black Panther Party. In her piece she mentions the Moynihan Report, a 1965 US government study that controversially blamed Black economic and political disenfranchisement on Black cultural factors.

The Combahee River Collective was a collective of Black lesbians based in Boston. The group took its name from the raid at Combahee Ferry, a Civil War action planned and led by Harriet Tubman that freed hundreds of slaves.

13.1 Frances M. Beal, Black Women's Manifesto; Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female (1969)

In attempting to analyze the situation of the black woman in America, one crashes abruptly into a solid wall of grave misconceptions, outright distortions of fact and defensive attitudes on the part of many. The system of capitalism (and its after birth...racism), under which we all live, has attempted by many devious ways and means to destroy the humanity of all people, and particularly the humanity of black people. This has meant an outrageous assault on every black man, woman and child who resides in the United States.

In keeping with its goal of destroying the black race's will to resist its subjugation, capitalism found it necessary to create a situation where the black man found it impossible to find meaningful or productive employment. More often than not, he couldn't find work of any kind. And the black woman likewise was manipulated by the system, economically exploited and physically assaulted.

She could often find work in the white man's kitchen, however, and sometimes became the sole breadwinner of the family. This predicament has led to many psychological problems on the part of both man and woman and has contributed to the turmoil that we find in the black family structure.

Unfortunately, neither the black man nor the black woman understood the true nature of the forces working upon them. Many black women tended to accept the capitalist evaluation of manhood and womanhood and believed, in fact, that black men were shiftless and lazy, otherwise they would get a job and support their families as they ought to. Personal relationships between black men and women were thus torn asunder and one result has been the separation of man from wife, mother from child, etc.

America has defined the roles to which each individual should subscribe. It has defined "manhood" in terms of its own interests and "femininity" likewise. Therefore, an individual who has a good job, makes a lot of money and drives a Cadillac is a real "man," and conversely, an individual who is lacking in these "qualities" is less of a man. The advertising media in this country continuously informs the american male of his need for indispensable signs of his virility the brand of cigarettes that cowboys prefer, the whiskey that has a masculine tang or the label of the jock strap that athletes wear.

The ideal model that is projected for a woman is to be surrounded by hypocritical homage and estranged from all real work, spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with conspicuous consumption, and limiting life's functions to simply a sex role. We unqualitatively reject these respective models. A woman who stays at home, caring for children and the house often leads an extremely sterile existence. She must lead her entire life as a satellite to her mate. He goes out into society and brings back a little piece of the world for her. His interests and his understanding of the world become her own and she can not develop herself as an individual, having been reduced to only a biological function. This kind of woman leads a parasitic existence that can aptly be described as "legalized prostitution."

Furthermore, it is idle dreaming to think of black women simply caring for their homes and children like the middle class white model. Most black women have to work to help house, feed and clothe their families. Black women make up a substantial percentage of the black working force and this is true for the poorest black family as well as the so-called "middle class" family.

Black women were never afforded any such phony luxuries. Though we have been browbeaten with this white image, the reality of the degrading and dehumanizing jobs that were relegated to us quickly dissipated this mirage of "womanhood." The following excerpts from a speech that Sojourner Truth made at a Women's Rights Convention in the 19th century show us how misleading and incomplete a life this model represents for us:

...Well, chilern, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o'kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de women at de norf all a talkin' 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin' 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place every whar. Nobody ever help me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best places...and ar'nt I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm...I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ar'nt I a woman? I could work as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well—and ar'nt I a woman? I have borne five chilern and I seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ar'nt I a woman?

Unfortunately, there seems to be some confusion in the Movement today as to who has been oppressing whom. Since the advent of black power, the black male has exerted a more prominent leadership role in our struggle for justice in this country. He sees the system for what it really is for the most part. But where he rejects its values and mores on many issues, when it comes to women, he seems to take his guidelines from the pages of the *Ladies Home Journal*.

Certain black men are maintaining that they have been castrated by society but that black women somehow escaped this persecution and even contributed to this emasculation. Let me state here and now that the black woman in america can justly be described as a "slave of a slave." By reducing the black man in america to such abject oppression, the black woman had no protector and was used, and is still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on black men. Her physical image has been maliciously maligned; she has been sexually molested and abused by the white colonizer; she has suffered the worst kind of economic exploitation, having been forced to serve as the white woman's maid and wet nurse for white offspring while her own children were more often than not, starving and neglected. It is the depth of degradation to be socially manipulated, physically raped, used to undermine your own household, and to be powerless to reverse this syndrome.

It is true that our husbands, fathers, brothers and sons have been emasculated, lynched and brutalized. They have suffered from the cruellest assault on mankind that the world has ever known. However, it is a gross distortion of fact to state that black women have oppressed black men. The capitalist system found it expedient to enslave and oppress them and proceeded to do so without signing any agreements with black women.

It must also be pointed out at this time, that black women are not resentful of the rise to power of black men. We welcome it. We see in it the eventual liberation of all black people from this corrupt system under which we suffer. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you have to negate one for the other. This kind of thinking is a product of miseducation; that it's either X or it's Y. It is fallacious reasoning that in order the black man to be strong, the black woman has to be weak.

Those who are exerting their "manhood" by telling black women to step back into a domestic, submissive role are assuming a counter-revolutionary position. Black women likewise have been abused by the system and we must begin talking about the elimination of all kinds of oppression. If we are talking about building a strong nation, capable of throwing off the yoke of capitalist oppression, then we are talking about the total involvement of every man, woman, and child, each with a highly developed political consciousness. We need our whole army out there dealing with the enemy and not half an army.

There are also some black women who feel that there is no more productive role in life than having and raising children. This attitude often reflects the conditioning of the society in which we live and is adopted (totally, completely and without change) from a bourgeois white model. Some young sisters who have never had to maintain a household and accept the confining role which this entails, tend to romanticize (along with the help of a few brothers) this role of housewife and mother. Black women who have had to endure this kind of function as the sole occupation of their life, are less apt to have these utopian visions.

Those who project in an intellectual manner how great and rewarding this role will be and who feel that the most important thing that they can contribute to the black nation is children, are doing themselves a great injustice. This line of reasoning completely negates the contributions that black women have historically made to our struggle for liberation. These black women include Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune and Fannie Lou Hamer to name but a few.

We live in a highly industrialized society and every member of the black nation must be as academically and technologically developed as possible. To wage a revolution, we need competent teachers, doctors, nurses, electronic experts, chemists, biologists, physicists, political scientists, and so on and so forth. Black women sitting at home reading bedtime stories to their children are just not going to make it.

Economic Exploitation of Black Women

The economic system of capitalism finds it expedient to reduce women to a state of enslavement. They oftentimes serve as a scapegoat for the evils of this system. Much in the same way that the poor white cracker of the South who is equally victimized, looks down upon blacks and contributes to the oppression of blacks—so by giving to men a false feeling of superiority (at least in their own home or in their relationships with women), the oppression of women acts as an escape valve for capitalism. Men may be cruelly exploited and subjected to all sorts of dehumanizing tactics on the part of the ruling class, but they brave someone who is below them—at least they're not women.

Women also represent a surplus labor supply, the control of which is absolutely necessary to the profitable functioning of capitalism. Women are systematically exploited by the system. They are paid less for the same work that men do and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without the possibility of advancement. Statistics from the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor show that the wage scale for white women was even below that of black men; and the wage scale for non-white women was the lowest of all:

White Males-----	\$6,704
Non-white Males-----	\$4,277
White Females-----	\$3,991
Non-white Females-----	\$2,861

Those industries which employ mainly black women are the most exploitative in the country. Domestic and hospital workers are good examples of this oppression; the garment workers in New York City provide us with another view of this economic slavery. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU)—whose overwhelming membership consists of black and Puerto Rican women—has a leadership that is nearly lily-white and male. This leadership has been working in collusion with the ruling class and has completely sold its soul to the corporate structure.

To add insult to injury, the ILGWU has invested heavily in business enterprises in racist, apartheid South Africa—with union funds. Not only does this bought-off leadership contribute to our continued exploitation in this country by not truly representing the best interests of its membership, but it audaciously uses funds that black and Puerto Rican women have provided to support the economy of a vicious government that is engaged in the economic rape and murder of our black brothers and sisters in our Motherland—Africa.

The entire labor movement in the United States has suffered as a result of the super exploitation of black workers and women. The unions have historically been racist and chauvinistic. They have upheld racism in this country (and condoned imperialist exploitation around the world) and have failed to fight the white skin privileges of white workers. They have failed to fight or even make an issue against the inequities in the hiring and pay of women workers. There has been virtually no struggle against either the racism of the white worker or the economic exploitation of the working woman, two factors which have consistently impeded the advancement of the real struggle against the ruling capitalist class.

This racist, chauvinistic and manipulative use of black workers and women, especially black women, has been a severe cancer on the american labor scene. It therefore becomes essential for those who understand the workings of capitalism and imperialism to realize that the exploitation of black people and women works to everyone's disadvantage and that the liberation of these two groups is a stepping stone to the liberation of all oppressed people in this country and around the world.

Bedroom Politics

I have briefly discussed the economic and psychological manipulation of black women, but perhaps the most outlandish act of oppression in modern times is the current campaign to promote sterilization of nonwhite women in an attempt to maintain the population and power imbalance between the white haves and the non-white have nots.

These tactics are but another example of the many devious schemes that the ruling elite attempt to perpetrate on the black population in order to keep itself in control. It has recently come to our attention that a massive campaign for so-called "birth control" is presently being promoted not only in the underdeveloped non-white areas of the world, but also in black communities here in the United States. However, what the authorities in charge of these programs refer to as "birth control" is in fact nothing but a method of outright surgical genocide.

The United States has been sponsoring sterilization clinics in non-white countries, especially in India where already some 3 million young men and boys in and around New Delhi have been sterilized in make-shift operating rooms set up by the american peace corps workers. Under these circumstances, it is understandable why certain countries view the Peace Corps not as a benevolent project, not as evidence of america's concern for underdeveloped areas, but rather as a threat to their very existence. This program could more aptly be named the "Death Corps."

The Vasectomy which is performed on males and takes only six or seven minutes is a relatively simple operation. The sterilization of a woman, on the other hand, is admittedly major surgery. This surgical operation (Salpingectomy)* must be performed in a hospital under general anesthesia. This method of "birth control" is a common procedure in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has long been used by the colonialist exploiter, the United States, as a huge experimental laboratory for medical research before allowing certain practices to be imported and used here. When the birth control pill was first being perfected, it was tried out on Puerto Rican women and selected black women (poor), using them like Guinea pigs, to evaluate its effect and its efficiency.

The Salpingectomy has now become the commonest operation in Puerto Rico, commoner than an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy. It is so widespread that it is referred to simply as "la operation." On the Island, 20% of the women between the ages of 15 and 45 have already been sterilized.

And now, as previously occurred with the pill, this method has been imported into the United States. These sterilization clinics are cropping up around the country in the black and Puerto Rican communities. These so-called "Maternity Clinics" specifically outfitted to purge black women or men of their reproductive possibilities, are appearing more and more in hospitals and clinics across the country.

A number of organizations have been formed to popularize the idea of sterilization such as the Association for Voluntary Sterilization and The Human Betterment (!?) Association for Voluntary Sterilization which has its headquarters in New York City. Front Royal, Virginia has one such "Maternity Clinic" in Warren Memorial Hospital. The tactics used in the clinic in Fauquier County, Virginia, where poor and helpless black mothers and young girls are pressured into undergoing

sterilization are certainly not confined to that clinic alone.

Threatened with the cut-off of relief funds, some black welfare women have been forced to accept this sterilization procedure in exchange for a continuation of welfare benefits. Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City performs these operations on many of its ward patients whenever it can convince the women to undergo this surgery. Mississippi and some of the other Southern states are notorious for this act. Black women are often afraid to permit any kind of necessary surgery because they know from bitter experience that they are more likely than not to come out of the hospital without their insides. (Both Salpingectomies & Hysterectomies are performed.)

We condemn this use of the black woman as a medical testing ground for the white middle class. Reports of the ill effects including deaths from the use of the birth control pill only started to come to light when the white privileged class began to be affected. These outrageous Nazi-like procedures on the part of medical researchers are but another manifestation of the totally amoral and dehumanizing brutality that the capitalist system perpetrates on black women. The sterilization experiments carried on in concentration camps some twenty-five years ago have been denounced the world over, but no one seems to get upset by the repetition of these same racist tactics today in the United States of America—land of the free and home of the brave. This campaign is as nefarious a program as Germany's gas chambers and in a long term sense, as effective and with the same objective.

The rigid laws concerning abortions in this country are another vicious means of subjugation, and, indirectly of outright murder. Rich white women somehow manage to obtain these operations with little or no difficulty. It is the poor black and Puerto Rican woman who is at the mercy of the local butcher. Statistics show us that the non-white death rate at the hands of the unqualified abortionist is substantially higher than for white women. Nearly half of the child-bearing deaths in New York City were attributed to abortion alone and out of these, 79% re among non-whites and Puerto Rican women.

We are not saying that black women should not practice birth control or family planning. Black women have the right and the responsibility to determine when it is in the interest of the struggle to have children or not to have them. It is also her right and responsibility to determine when it is in her own best interests to have children, how many she will have, and how far apart and this right must not be relinquished to anyone.

The lack of the availability of safe birth control methods, the forced sterilization practices and the inability to obtain legal abortions are all symptoms of a decadent society that jeopardizes the health of black women (and thereby the entire black race) in its attempts to control the very life processes of human beings. This repressive control of black women is symptomatic of a society that believes it has the right to bring political factors into the privacy of the bedchamber. The elimination of these horrendous conditions will free black women for full participation in the revolution, and thereafter, in the building of the new society.

*Salpingectomy—Through an abdominal incision, the surgeon cuts both Fallopian tubes and ties off the separated ends after which there is no way for the egg to pass from the ovary to the womb.

Relationship to White Movement

Much has been written recently about the white women's liberation movement in the United States and the question arises whether there are any parallels between this struggle and the movement on the part of black women for total emancipation. While there are certain comparisons that one can

make, simply because we both live under the same exploitative system, there are certain differences, some of which are quite basic.

The white women's movement is far from being monolithic. Any white group that does not have an anti-imperialist and anti-racist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the black women's struggle. Are white women asking to be equal to white men in their pernicious treatment of third world peoples? What assurances have black women that white women will be any less racist and exploitative if they had the power and were in a position to do so? These are serious questions that the white women's liberation movement has failed to address itself to.

Black people are engaged in a life and death struggle with the oppressive forces of this country and the main emphasis of black women must be to combat the capitalist, racist exploitation of black people. While it is true that male chauvinism has become institutionalized in american society, one must always look for the main enemy...the fundamental cause of the female condition. In fact, some groups come to the incorrect conclusion that their oppression is due simply to male chauvinism. They therefore, have an extremely antimale tone to their dissertations.

Another major differentiation is that the white women's liberation movement is basically middle class. Very few of these women suffer the extreme economic exploitation that most black women are subjected to day by day. If they find housework degrading and dehumanizing, they are financially able to buy their freedom—usually by hiring a black maid. The economic and social realities of the black woman's life are the most crucial for us. It is not an intellectual persecution alone; the movement is not a psychological outburst for us; it is tangible; we can taste it in all our endeavors. We as black women have got to deal with the problems that the black masses deal with, for our problems in reality are one and the same.

If the white groups do not realize that they are in fact, fighting capitalism and racism, we do not have common bonds. If they do not realize that the reasons for their condition lie in a debilitating economic and social system, and not simply that men get a vicarious pleasure out of "consuming their bodies for exploitative reasons," (This kind of reasoning seems to be quite prevalent in certain white women's groups) then we cannot unite with them around common grievances or even discuss these groups in a serious manner, because they're completely irrelevant to black women in particular or to the black struggle in general.

The New World

The black community and black women especially, must begin raising questions about the kind of society we wish to see established. We must note the ways in which capitalism oppresses us and then move to create institutions that will eliminate these destructive influences.

The new world that we are struggling to create must destroy oppression of any type. The value of this new system will be determined by the status of those persons who are presently most oppressed—the low man on the totem pole. Unless women in any enslaved nation are completely liberated, the change cannot really be called a revolution. If the black woman has to retreat to the position she occupied before the armed struggle, the whole movement and the whole struggle will have retreated in terms of truly freeing the colonized population.

A people's revolution that engages the participation of every member of the community, including men, and women, brings about a certain transformation in the participants as a result of this participation. Once you have caught a glimpse of freedom or tasted a bit of self-determination, you can't go back to old routines that were established under a racist, capitalist regime. We must begin to understand that a revolution entails not only the willingness to lay our lives on the firing line

and get killed. In some ways, this is an easy commitment to make. To die for the revolution is a oneshot deal; to live for the revolution means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns.

This will mean changing the traditional routines that we have established as a result of living in a totally corrupting society. It means changing how you relate to your wife, your husband, your parents and your coworkers. If we are going to liberate ourselves as a people, it must be recognized that black women have very specific problems that have to be spoken to. We must be liberated along with the rest of the population. We cannot wait to start working on those problems until that great day in the future when the revolution somehow miraculously, is accomplished.

To assign women the role of housekeeper and mother while men go forth into battle is a highly questionable doctrine for a revolutionary to profess. Each individual must develop a high political consciousness in order to understand how this system enslaves us all and what actions we must take to bring about its total destruction. Those who consider themselves to be revolutionary must begin to deal with other revolutionaries as equals. And so far as I know, revolutionaries are not determined by sex.

Old people, young people, men and women must take part in the struggle. To relegate women to purely supportive roles or to simply cultural considerations is dangerous doctrine to project. Unless black men who are preparing themselves for armed struggle understand that the society which we are trying to create is one in which the oppression of ALL MEMBERS of that society is eliminated, then the revolution will have failed in its avowed purpose.

Given the mutual commitment of black men and black women alike to the liberation of our people and other oppressed peoples around the world, the total involvement of each individual is necessary. A revolutionary has the responsibility of not only toppling those that are now in a position of power, but more importantly, the responsibility of creating new institutions that will eliminate all forms of oppression for all people. We must begin to re-write our understanding of traditional personal relationships between man and woman.

All the resources that the black community can muster up must be channeled into the struggle. Black women must take an active part in bringing about the kind of world where our children, our loved ones, and each citizen can grow up and live as decent human beings, free from the pressures of racism and capitalist exploitation.

13.2 Angela Davis, Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves (1972)

I

The paucity of literature on the black woman is outrageous on its face. But we must also contend with the fact that too many of these rare studies must claim as their signal achievement the reinforcement of fictitious clichés. They have given credence to grossly distorted categories through which the black woman continues to be perceived. In the words of Nathan and Julia Hare, "... she has been labeled 'aggressive' or 'matriarchal' by white scholars and 'castrating female' by [some] blacks." (Transaction, Nov.-Dec, 1970) Many have recently sought to remedy this situation. But for the time being, at least, we are still confronted with these reified images of ourselves. And for now, we must still assume the responsibility of shattering them.

Initially, I did not envision this paper as strictly confined to the era of slavery. Yet, as I began

to think through the issue of the black matriarch, I came to the conclusion that it had to be refuted at its presumed historical inception.

The chief problem I encountered stemmed from the conditions of my incarceration: opportunities for researching the issue I wanted to explore were extremely limited. I chose, therefore, to entitle this piece “Reflections ...” It does not pretend to be more than a collection of ideas which would constitute a starting point—a framework within which to conduct a rigorous reinvestigation of the black woman as she interacted with her people and with her oppressive environment during slavery.

I would like to dedicate these reflections to one of the most admirable black leaders to emerge from the ranks of our liberation movement—to George Jackson, whom I loved and respected in every way. As I came to know and love him, I saw him developing an acute sensitivity to the real problems facing black women and thus refining his ability to distinguish these from their mythical transpositions. George was uniquely aware of the need to extricate himself and other black men from the remnants of divisive and destructive myths purporting to represent the black woman. If his life had not been so precipitously and savagely extinguished, he would have surely accomplished a task he had already outlined some time ago: a systematic critique of his past misconceptions about black women and of their roots in the ideology of the established order. He wanted to appeal to other black men, still similarly disoriented, to likewise correct themselves through self-criticism. George viewed this obligation as a revolutionary duty, but also, and equally important, as an expression of his boundless love for all black women.

II

The matriarchal black woman has been repeatedly invoked as one of the fatal by-products of slavery. When the Moynihan Report consecrated this myth with Washington’s stamp of approval, its spurious content and propagandistic mission should have become apparent. Yet even outside the established ideological apparatus, and also among black people, unfortunate references to the matriarchate can still be encountered. Occasionally, there is even acknowledgement of the “tangle of pathology” it supposedly engendered. (This black matriarchate, according to Moynihan et al defines the roots of our oppression as a people.) An accurate portrait of the African woman in bondage must debunk the myth of the matriarchate. Such a portrait must simultaneously attempt to illuminate the historical matrix of her oppression and must evoke her varied, often heroic, responses to the slaveholder’s domination.

Lingering beneath the notion of the black matriarch is an unspoken indictment of our female forebears as having actively assented to slavery. The notorious cliché, the “emasculating female,” has its roots in the fallacious inference that in playing a central part in the slave “family,” the black woman related to the slaveholding class as collaborator. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the most fundamental sense, the slave system did not—and could not—engender and recognize a matriarchal family structure. Inherent in the very concept of the matriarchy is “power.” It would have been exceedingly risky for the slaveholding class to openly acknowledge symbols of authority—female symbols no less than male. Such legitimized concentrations of authority might eventually unleash their “power” against the slave system itself.

The American brand of slavery strove toward a rigidified disorganization in family life, just as it had to proscribe all potential social structures within which black people might forge a collective and conscious existence.¹ Mothers and fathers were brutally separated; children, when they became of age, were branded and frequently severed from their mothers. That the mother was “the only legitimate parent of her child” did not therefore mean that she was even permitted to guide it to

maturity.

Those who lived under a common roof were often unrelated through blood. Frederick Douglass, for instance, had no recollection of his father. He only vaguely recalled having seen his mother—and then on extremely rare occasions. Moreover, at the age of seven, he was forced to abandon the dwelling of his grandmother, of whom he would later say: “She was to me a mother and a father.”² The strong personal bonds between immediate family members which oftentimes persisted despite coerced separation bore witness to the remarkable capacity of black people for resisting the disorder so violently imposed on their lives.

Where families were allowed to thrive, they were, for the most part, external fabrications serving the designs of an avaricious, profit-seeking slaveholder.

The strong hand of the slave owner dominated the Negro family, which existed at his mercy and often at his own personal instigation. An ex-slave has told of getting married on one plantation: ‘When you married, you had to jump over a broom three times.’³

This slave went on to describe the various ways in which his master forcibly coupled men and women with the aim of producing the maximum number of healthy child-slaves. In the words of John Henrik Clarke,

The family as a functional entity was outlawed and permitted to exist only when it benefited the slave-master. Maintenance of the slave family as a family unit benefited the slave owners only when, and to the extent that such unions created new slaves who could be exploited.⁴

The designation of the black woman as a matriarch is a cruel misnomer. It is a misnomer because it implies stable kinship structures within which the mother exercises decisive authority. It is cruel because it ignores the profound traumas the black woman must have experienced when she had to surrender her child-bearing to alien and predatory economic interests.

Even the broadest construction of the matriarch concept would not render it applicable to the black slave woman. But it should not be inferred that she therefore played no significant role in the community of slaves. Her indispensable efforts to ensure the survival of her people can hardly be contested. Even if she had done no more, her deeds would still be laudable. But her concern and struggles for physical survival, while clearly important, did not constitute her most outstanding contributions. It will be submitted that by virtue of the brutal force of circumstances, the black woman was assigned the mission of promoting the consciousness and practice of resistance. A great deal has been said about the black *man* and resistance, but very little about the unique relationship black women bore to the resistance struggles during slavery. To understand the part she played in developing and sharpening the thrust towards freedom, the broader meaning of slavery and of American slavery in particular must be explored.

Slavery is an ancient human institution. Of slave labor in its traditional form and of serfdom as well, Karl Marx had the following to say:

The slave stands in absolutely no relation to the objective conditions of his labor; it is rather the labor itself, in the form of the slave as of the serf, which is placed in the category of inorganic condition of production alongside the other natural beings, e.g. cattle, or regarded as an appendage of the earth.⁵

The bondsman's existence as a natural condition of production is complemented and reinforced, according to Marx, by his membership in a social grouping which he perceives to be an extension of nature. Enmeshed in what appears to be a natural state of affairs, the attitude of the slave, to a greater or lesser degree, would be an acquiescence in his subjugation. Engels points out that in Athens, the state could depend on a police force consisting entirely of slaves.⁶

The fabric of American slavery differed significantly from ancient slavery and feudalism. True, black people were forced to act as if they were "inorganic conditions of production." For slavery was "personality swallowed up in the sordid idea of property—manhood lost in chattelhood."⁷ But there were no pre-existent social structures or cultural dictates which might induce reconciliation to the circumstances of their bondage. On the contrary, Africans had been uprooted from their natural environment, their social relations, their culture. No legitimate socio-cultural surroundings would be permitted to develop and flourish, for, in all likelihood, they would be utterly incompatible with the demands of slavery.

Yet another fact would militate against harmony and equilibrium in the slave's relation to his bondage: slavery was enclosed in a society otherwise characterized by "free" wage-labor. Black men and women could always contrast their chains with the nominally free status of white working people. This was quite literally true in such cases where, like Frederick Douglass, they were contracted out as wage-laborers. Unlike the "free" white men alongside whom they worked, they had no right to the meager wages they earned. Such were some of the many contradictions unloosed by the effort to forcibly inject slavery into the early stages of American capitalism.

The combination of a historically superceded slave labor system based almost exclusively on race and the drive to strip black people of all their social and cultural bonds would create a fateful rupture at the heart of the slave system itself. The slaves would not readily adopt fatalistic attitudes towards the conditions surrounding and ensnaring their lives. They were a people who had been violently thrust into a patently "unnatural" subjugation. If the slaveholders had not maintained an absolute monopoly of violence, if they had not been able to rely on large numbers of their fellow white men—indeed the entire ruling class as well as misled working people—to assist them in their terrorist machinations, slavery would have been far less feasible than it actually proved to be.

The magnitude and effects of the black people's defiant rejection of slavery has not yet been fully documented and illuminated. But there is more than ample evidence that they consistently refused to succumb to the all-encompassing dehumanization objectively demanded by the slave system. Comparatively recent studies have demonstrated that the few slave uprisings—too spectacular to be relegated to oblivion by the racism of ruling class historians—were not isolated occurrences, as the latter would have had us believe. The reality, we know now, was that these open rebellions erupted with such a frequency that they were as much a part of the texture of slavery as the conditions of servitude themselves. And these revolts were only the tip of an iceberg: resistance expressed itself in other grand modes and also in the seemingly trivial forms of feigned illness and studied indolence.

If resistance was an organic ingredient of slave life, it had to be directly nurtured by the social organization which the slaves themselves improvised. The consciousness of their oppression, the conscious thrust towards its abolition could not have been sustained without impetus from the community they pulled together through the sheer force of their own strength. Of necessity, this community would revolve around the realm which was further most removed from the immediate arena of domination. It could only be located in and around the living quarters, the area where the basic needs of physical life were met.

In the area of production, the slaves—pressed into the mold of beasts of burden—were forcibly

deprived of their humanity. (And a human being thoroughly dehumanized, has no desire for freedom.) But the community gravitating around the domestic quarters might possibly permit a retrieval of the man and the woman in their fundamental humanity. We can assume that in a very real material sense, it was only in domestic life—away from the eyes and whip of the overseer—that the slaves could attempt to assert the modicum of freedom they still retained. It was only there that they might be inspired to project techniques of expanding it further by leveling what few weapons they had against the slaveholding class whose unmitigated drive for profit was the source of their misery.

Via this path, we return to the African slave woman: in the living quarters, the major responsibilities “naturally” fell to her. It was the woman who was charged with keeping the “home” in order. This role was dictated by the male supremacist ideology of white society in America; it was also woven into the patriarchal traditions of Africa. As her biological destiny, the woman bore the fruits of procreation; as her social destiny, she cooked, sewed, washed, cleaned house, raised the children. Traditionally the labor of females, domestic work is supposed to complement and confirm their inferiority.

But with the black slave woman, there is a strange twist of affairs: in the infinite anguish of ministering to the needs of the men and children around her (who were not necessarily members of her immediate family), she was performing the only labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor. There was no compensation for work in the fields; it served no useful purpose for the slaves. Domestic labor was the only meaningful labor for the slave community as a whole (discounting as negligible the exceptional situations where slaves received some pay for their work).

Precisely through performing the drudgery which has long been a central expression of the socially conditioned inferiority of women, the black woman in chains could help to lay the foundation for some degree of autonomy, both for herself and her men. Even as she was suffering under her unique oppression as female, she was thrust by the force of circumstances into the center of the slave community. She was, therefore, essential to the *survival* of the community. Not all people have survived enslavement; hence her survival-oriented activities were themselves a form of resistance. Survival, moreover, was the prerequisite of all higher levels of struggle.

But much more remains to be said of the black woman during slavery. The dialectics of her oppression will become far more complex. It is true that she was a victim of the myth that only the woman, with her diminished capacity for mental and physical labor, should do degrading household work. Yet, the alleged benefits of the ideology of femininity did not accrue to her. She was not sheltered or protected; she would not remain oblivious to the desperate struggle for existence unfolding outside the “home.” She was also there in the fields, alongside the man, toiling under the lash from sun-up to sun-down.

This was one of the supreme ironies of slavery: in order to approach its strategic goal—to extract the greatest possible surplus from the labor of the slaves—the black woman had to be released from the chains of the myth of femininity. In the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, “...our women in black had freedom contemptuously thrust upon them.”⁸ In order to function as slave, the black woman had to be annulled as woman, that is, as woman in her historical stance of wardship under the entire male hierarchy. The sheer force of things rendered her equal to her man.

Excepting the woman’s role as caretaker of the household, male supremacist structures could not become deeply embedded in the internal workings of the slave system. Though the ruling class was male and rabidly chauvinistic, the slave system could not confer upon the black man the appearance of a privileged position vis-a-vis the black woman. The man-slave could not be the unquestioned

superior within the “family” or community, for there was no such thing as the “family provided” among the slaves. The attainment of slavery’s intrinsic goals was contingent upon the fullest and most brutal utilization of the productive capacities of every man, woman and child. They all had to “provide” for the master. The black woman was therefore wholly integrated into the productive force.

The bell rings at four o’clock in the morning and they have half an hour to get ready. Men and women start together, and the women must work as steadily as the men and perform the same tasks as the men.⁹

Even in the posture of motherhood—otherwise the occasion for hypocritical adoration—the black woman was treated with not greater compassion and with no less severity than her man. As one slave related in a narrative of his life:

...women who had sucking children suffered much from their breasts becoming full of milk, the infants being left at home; they therefore could not keep up with the other hands: I have seen the overseer beat them with raw hide so that the blood and the milk flew mingled from their breasts.¹⁰

Moses Grandy, ex-slave, continues his description with an account of a typical form of field punishment reserved for the black woman with child:

She is compelled to lie down over a hole made to receive her corpulency, and is flogged with the whip, or beat with a paddle, which has holes in it; at every stroke comes a blister.¹¹

The unbridled cruelty of this leveling process whereby the black woman was forced into equality with the black man requires no further explanation. She shared in the deformed equality of equal oppression.

But out of this deformed equality was forged quite undeliberately, yet inexorably, a state of affairs which could unharness an immense potential in the black woman. Expending indispensable labor for the enrichment of her oppressor, she could attain a practical awareness of the oppressor’s utter dependence on her—for the master needs the slave far more than the slave needs the master. At the same time she could realize that while her productive activity was wholly subordinated to the will of the master, it was nevertheless proof of her ability to transform things. For “labor is the living, shaping fire; it represents the impermanence of thing, their temporality...”¹²

The black woman’s consciousness of the oppression suffered by her people was honed in the bestial realities of daily experience. It would not be the stunted awareness of a woman confined to the home. She would be prepared to ascend to the same levels of resistance which were accessible to her men. Even as she performed her housework, the black woman’s role in the slave community could not be identical to the historically evolved female role. Stripped of the palliative feminine veneer which might have encouraged a passive performance of domestic tasks, she was now uniquely capable of weaving into the warp and woof of domestic life a profound consciousness of resistance.

With the contributions of strong black women, the slave community as a whole could achieve heights unscaleable within the families of the white oppressed or even within the patriarchal kinship groups of Africa. Latently or actively it was always a community of resistance. It frequently erupted in insurgency, but was daily animated by the minor acts of sabotage which harassed the slave master to no end. Had the black woman failed to rise to the occasion, the community of slaves could not

have fully developed in this direction. The slave system would have to deal with the black woman as the custodian of a house of resistance.

The oppression of black women during the era of slavery, therefore, had to be buttressed by a level of overt ruling-class repression. Her routine oppression had to assume an unconcealed dimension of outright counter-insurgency.

¹ It is interesting to note a parallel in Nazi Germany: with all its ranting and raving about motherhood and the family, Hitler's regime made a conscious attempt to strip the family of virtually all its social functions. The thrust of their unspoken program for the family was to reduce it to a biological unit and to force its members to relate in an unmediated fashion to the fascist bureaucracy. Clearly the Nazis endeavored to crush the family in order to ensure that it could not become a center from which oppositional activity might originate.

² Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, New York: The Citadel Press, 1969 (1st ed., 1951), p. 272.

³ Andrew Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, p. 61.

⁴ John Henrik Clarke, "The Black Woman: A Figure in World History," Part III, *Essence*, New York: July, 1971.

⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953, p. 389.

⁶ Friedrich Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, New York: International Publishers, 1942, p. 107.

⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, New York: Collier Books, 1962, p. 96.

⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater, Voices from Within the Veil*, New York: AMS Press, 1969, p. 185.

⁹ Lewis Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke, Sons of a Soldier of the Revolution*, Boston: 1846, p. 127 [Quoted by E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*].

¹⁰ Moses Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy; Late a Slave in the United States of America*, Boston: 1844, p. 18 [Quoted by Frazier].

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 266.

III

To say that the oppression of black slave women necessarily incorporated open forms of counter-insurgency is not as extravagant as it might initially appear. The penetration of counter-insurgency into the day to day routine of the slave master's domination will be considered towards the end of this paper. First, the participation of black women in the overt and explosive upheavals which constantly rocked the slave system must be confirmed. This will be an indication of the magnitude of her role as caretaker of a household of resistance—of the degree to which she could concretely encourage those around her to keep their eyes on freedom. It will also confirm the objective circumstances to which the slave master's counter-insurgency was a response.

With the sole exceptions of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, black women of the slave era remain more or less enshrouded in unrevealed history. And, as Earl Conrad has demonstrated, even "General Tubman's" role has been consistently and grossly minimized. She was a far greater warrior against slavery than is suggested by the prevalent misconception that her only outstanding contribution was to make nineteen trips into the South, bringing over 300 slaves to their freedom.

[She] was head of the Intelligence Service in the Department of the South throughout the Civil War; she is the only American woman to lead troops black and white on the field of battle, as she did in the Department of the South ... She was a compelling and stirring orator in the councils of the abolitionists and the anti-slavers, a favorite of the antislavery conferences. She was the fellow planner with Douglass, Martin Delany, Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith and other leaders of the antislavery movement.¹³

No extensive and systematic study of the role of black women in resisting slavery has come to my attention. It has been noted that large numbers of freed black women worked towards the purchase of their relatives' and friends' freedom. About the participation of women in both the well-known and more obscure slave revolts, only casual remarks have been made. It has been observed, for instance, that Gabriel's wife was active in planning the rebellion spearheaded by her husband, but little else has been said about her.

The sketch which follows is based in its entirety on the works of Herbert Aptheker, the only resources available to me at the time of this writing.¹⁴ These facts, gleaned from Aptheker's works on slave revolts and other forms of resistance, should signal the urgency to undertake a thorough study of the black woman as anti-slavery rebel. In 1971 this work is far overdue.

Aptheker's research has disclosed the widespread existence of communities of blacks who were neither free nor in bondage. Throughout the South (in South and North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama), maroon communities consisting of fugitive slaves and their descendants were "an ever present feature"—from 1642 to 1864—of slavery. They provided "...havens for fugitives, served as bases for marauding expeditions against nearby plantations and, at times, supplied leadership to planned uprisings."¹⁵

Every detail of these communities was invariably determined by and steeped in resistance, for their *raison d'être* emanated from their perpetual assault on slavery. Only in a fighting stance could the maroons hope to secure their constantly imperiled freedom. As a matter of necessity, the women of those communities were compelled to define themselves—no less than the men—through their many acts of resistance. Hence, throughout this brief survey the counter-attacks and heroic efforts at defense assisted by maroon women will be a recurring motif.

As it will be seen, black women often poisoned the food and set fire to the houses of their masters. For those who were also employed as domestics these particular overt forms of resistance were especially available.

The vast majority of the incidents to be related involve either tactically unsuccessful assaults or eventually thwarted attempts at defense. In all likelihood, numerous successes were achieved, even against the formidable obstacles posed by the slave system. Many of these were probably unpublicized even at the time of their occurrence, lest they provide encouragement to the rebellious proclivities of other slaves and, for other slaveholders, an occasion for fear and despair.

During the early years of the slave era (1708) a rebellion broke out in New York. Among its participants were surely many women, for one, along with three men, was executed in retaliation for the killing of seven whites. It may not be entirely insignificant that while the men were hanged, she was heinously burned alive.¹⁶ In the same colony, women played an active role in a 1712 uprising in the course of which slaves, with their guns, clubs and knives, killed members of the slaveholding class and managed to wound others. While some of the insurgents—among them a pregnant woman were captured, others—including a woman—committed suicide rather than surrender.¹⁷

"In New Orleans one day in 1730 a woman slave received 'a violent blow from a French soldier for refusing to obey him' and in her anger shouted 'that the French should not long insult Negroes.'¹⁸ As it was later disclosed, she and undoubtedly many other women, had joined in a vast plan to

destroy slaveholders. Along with eight men, this dauntless woman was executed. Two years later, Louisiana pronounced a woman and four men leaders of a planned rebellion. They were all executed and, in a typically savage gesture, their heads publicly displayed on poles.¹⁹

Charleston, South Carolina condemned a black woman to die in 1740 for arson,²⁰ a form of sabotage, as earlier noted, frequently carried out by women. In Maryland, for instance, a slave woman was executed in 1776 for having destroyed by fire her master's house, his outhouses and tobacco house.²¹

In the thick of the Colonies' war with England, a group of defiant slave women and men were arrested in Saint Andrew's Parish, Georgia in 1774. But before they were captured, they had already brought a number of slave owners to their death.²²

The maroon communities have been briefly described; from 1782 to 1784, Louisiana was a constant target of maroon attacks. When twenty-five of this community's members were finally taken prisoner, men and women alike were all severely punished.²³

As can be inferred from previous example, the North did not escape the tremendous impact of fighting black women. In Albany, New York, two women were among three slaves executed for anti-slavery activities in 1794.²⁴ The respect and admiration accorded the black woman fighter by her people is strikingly illustrated by an incident which transpired in York, Pennsylvania: when, during the early months of 1803, Margaret Bradley was convicted of attempting to poison two white people, the black inhabitants of the area revolted en masse.

They made several attempts to destroy the town by fire and succeeded, within a period of three weeks, in burning eleven buildings. Patrols were established, strong guards set up, the militia dispatched to the scene of the unrest ... and a reward of three hundred dollars offered for the capture of the insurrectionists.²⁵

A successful elimination by poisoning of several "of our respectable men" (said a letter to the governor of North Carolina) was met by the execution of four or five slaves. One was a woman who was burned alive.²⁶ In 1810, two women and a man were accused of arson in Virginia.²⁷

In 1811 North Carolina was the scene of a confrontation between a maroon community and a slave-catching posse. Local newspapers reported that its members "had bid defiance to any force whatever and were resolved to stand their ground." Of the entire community, two were killed, one wounded and two—both women—were captured.²⁸

Aptheker's *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* contains a portion of the transcript of an 1812 confession of a slave rebel in Virginia. The latter divulged the information that a black woman brought him into a plan to kill their master and that yet another black woman had been charged with concealing him after the killing occurred.²⁹

In 1816 it was discovered that a community of three hundred escaped slaves—men, women, children—had occupied a fort in Florida. After the U.S. Army was dispatched with instructions to destroy the community, a ten-day siege terminated with all but forty of the three hundred dead. All the slaves fought to the very end.³⁰ In the course of a similar, though smaller confrontation between maroons and a militia group (in South Carolina, 1826), a woman and a child were killed.³¹ Still another maroon community was attacked in Mobile, Alabama in 1837. Its inhabitants, men and women alike, resisted fiercely—according to local newspapers, "fighting like Spartans."³²

Convicted of having been among those who, in 1829, had been the cause of a devastating fire in Augusta, Georgia, a black woman was "executed, dissected, and exposed" (according to an English visitor). Moreover, the execution of yet another woman, about to give birth, was imminent.³³ During the same year, a group of slaves, being led from Maryland to be sold in the South, had apparently

planned to kill the traders and make their way to freedom. One of the traders was successfully done away with, but eventually a posse captured all the slaves. Of the six leaders sentenced to death, one was a woman. She was first permitted, for reasons of economy, to give birth to her child.³⁴ Afterwards, she was publicly hanged.

The slave class in Louisiana, as noted earlier, was not unaware of the formidable threat posed by the black woman who chose to fight. It responded accordingly: in 1846 a posse of slave owners ambushed a community of maroons, killing one woman and wounding two others. A black man was also assassinated.³⁵ Neither could the border states escape the recognition that slave women were eager to battle for their freedom. In 1850 in the state of Missouri, “about thirty slaves, men and women, of four different owners, had armed themselves with knives, clubs and three guns and set out for a free state.” Their pursuers, who could unleash a far more powerful violence than they, eventually thwarted their plans.³⁶

This factual survey of but a few of the open acts of resistance in which black women played major roles will close with two further events. When a maroon camp in Mississippi was destroyed in 1857, four of its members did not manage to elude capture, one of whom was a fugitive slave woman.³⁷ All of them, women as well as men, must have waged a valiant fight. Finally, there occurred in October, 1862 a skirmish between maroons and a scouting party of Confederate soldiers in the state of Virginia.³⁸ This time, however, the maroons were the victors and it may well have been that some of the many women helped to put the soldiers to death.

¹³ Earl Conrad, “I Bring You General Tubman,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 1, No. 3–4, Jan.-Feb., 1970, p. 4.

¹⁴ In February, 1949, Herbert Aptheker published an essay in *Masses and Mainstream* entitled “The Negro Woman.” As yet, however, I have been unable to obtain it.

¹⁵ Herbert Aptheker, “Slave Guerrilla Warfare” in *To Be Free, Studies in American Negro History*, New York: International Publishers, 1969 (1st ed., 1948), p. 11.

¹⁶ Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, New York: International Publishers, 1970 (1st

ed., 1943), p. 169.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 182.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 190.

²¹ Ibid., p. 145.

²² Ibid., p. 201.

²³ Ibid., p. 207.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 239.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 241–242.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 247.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 251.

²⁹ Aptheker, *Documentary History*, pp. 55–57.

³⁰ Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, p. 259.

³¹ Ibid., p. 277.

³² Ibid., p. 259.

³³ Ibid., p. 281.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 487.

³⁵ Aptheker, “Guerrilla Warfare,” p. 27.

³⁶ Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, p. 342.

³⁷ Aptheker, “Guerrilla Warfare,” p. 28.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

IV

The oppression of slave women had to assume dimensions of open counter-insurgency. Against the background of the facts presented above, it would be difficult indeed to refute this contention. As for those who engaged in open battle, they were no less ruthlessly punished than slave men. It would even appear that in many cases they may have suffered penalties which were more excessive than those meted out to the men. On occasion, when men were hanged, the women were burned alive. If such practices were wide spread, their logic would be clear. They would be terrorist methods designed to dissuade other black women from following the examples of their fighting sisters. If all black women rose up alongside their men, the institution of slavery would be in difficult straits.

It is against the backdrop of her role as fighter that the routine oppression of the slave woman must be explored once more. If she was burned, hanged, broken on the wheel, her head paraded on poles before her oppressed brothers and sisters, she must have also felt the edge of this counter-insurgency as a fact of her daily existence. The slave system would not only have to make conscious efforts to stifle the tendencies towards acts of the kind described above; it would be no less necessary to stave off escape attempts (escapes to maroon country!) and all the various forms of sabotage within the system. Feigning illness was also resistance as were work slowdowns and actions destructive to the crops. The more extensive these acts, the more the slaveholder's profits would tend to diminish.

While a detailed study of the myriad modes in which this counter-insurgency was manifested can and should be conducted, the following reflections will focus on a single aspect of the slave woman's oppression, particularly prominent in its brutality.

Much has been said about the sexual abuses to which the black woman was forced to submit. They are generally explained as an outgrowth of the male supremacy of Southern culture: the purity of white womanhood could not be violated by the aggressive sexual activity desired by the white male. His instinctual urges would find expression in his relationships with his property—the black slave woman, who would have to become his unwilling concubine. No doubt there is an element of truth in these statements, but it is equally important to unearth the meaning of these sexual abuses from the vantage point of the woman who was assaulted.

In keeping with the theme of these reflections, it will be submitted that the slave master's sexual domination of the black woman contained an unveiled element of counter-insurgency. To understand the basis for this assertion, the dialectical moments of the slave woman's oppression must be restated and their movement recaptured. The prime factor, it has been said, was the total and violent expropriation of her labor with no compensation save the pittance necessary for bare existence.

Secondly, as female, she was the housekeeper of the living quarters. In this sense, she was already doubly oppressed. However, having been wrested from passive, "feminine" existence by the sheer force of things—literally by forced labor—confining domestic tasks were incommensurable with what she had become. That is to say, by virtue of her participation in production, she would not act the part of the passive female, but could experience the same need as her men to challenge the conditions of her subjugation. As the center of domestic life, the only life at all removed from the arena of exploitation, and thus as an important source of survival, the black woman could play a pivotal role in nurturing the thrust towards freedom.

The slave master would attempt to thwart this process. He knew that as female, this slave woman could be particularly vulnerable in her sexual existence. Although he would not pet her and deck her out in frills, the white master could endeavor to reestablish her femaleness by reducing her to the level of her *biological* being. Aspiring with his sexual assaults to establish her as a female *animal*, he would be striving to destroy her proclivities towards resistance. Of the sexual relations of animals, taken at their abstract biological level (and not in terms of their quite different social potential for human beings), Simone de Beauvoir says the following:

It is unquestionably the male who takes the female—she is taken. Often the word applies literally, for whether by means of special organs or through superior strength, the male seizes her and holds her in place; he performs the copulatory movements; and, among insects, birds, and mammals, he penetrates... Her body becomes a resistance to be broken through...³⁹

The act of copulation, reduced by the white man to an animal-like act, would be symbolic of the effort to conquer the resistance the black woman could unloose.

In confronting the black woman as adversary in a sexual contest, the master would be subjecting her to the most elemental form of terrorism distinctively suited for the female: rape. Given the already terroristic texture of plantation life, it would be as potential victim of rape that the slave woman would be most unguarded. Further, she might be most conveniently manipulable if the master contrived a ransom system of sorts, forcing her to pay with her body for food, diminished severity in treatment, the safety of her children, etc.

The integration of rape into the sparsely furnished legitimate social life of the slaves harks back to the feudal "right of the first night," the *jus primae noctis*. The feudal lord manifested and reinforced his domination over the serfs by asserting his authority to have sexual intercourse with all the females. The right itself referred specifically to all freshly married women. But while the

right to the first night eventually evolved into the institutionalized “virgin tax,”⁴⁰ the American slaveholder’s sexual domination never lost its openly terroristic character.

As a direct attack on the black female as potential insurgent, this sexual repression finds its parallels in virtually every historical situation where the woman actively challenges oppression. Thus, Franz Fanon could say of the Algerian woman: “A woman led away by soldiers who comes back a week later—it is not necessary to question her to understand that she has been violated dozens of times.”⁴¹

In its political contours, the rape of the black woman was not exclusively an attack upon her. Indirectly, its target was also the slave community as a whole. In launching the sexual war on the woman, the master would not only assert his sovereignty over a critically important figure of the slave community, he would also be aiming a blow against the black man. The latter’s instinct to protect his female relations and comrades (now stripped of its male supremacist implications) would be frustrated and violated to the extreme. Placing the white male’s sexual barbarity in bold relief, Du Bois cries out in a rhetorical vein:

I shall forgive the South much in its final judgement day: I shall forgive its slavery, for slavery is a world-old habit; I shall forgive its fighting for a well-lost cause, and for remembering that struggle with tender tears; I shall forgive its so-called ‘pride of race,’ the passion of its hot blood, and even its dear, old, laughable strutting and posing; but one thing I shall never forgive, neither in this world nor the world to come: its wanton and continued and persistent insulting of the black womanhood which it sought and seeks to prostitute to its lust.⁴²

The retaliatory import of the rape for the black man would be entrapment in an untenable situation. Clearly the master hoped that once the black man was struck by his manifest inability to rescue his women from sexual assaults of the master, he would begin to experience deep-seated doubts about his ability to resist at all.

Certainly the wholesale rape of slave women must have had a profound impact on the slave community. Yet it could not succeed in its intrinsic aim of stifling the impetus towards struggle. Countless black women did not passively submit to these abuses, as the slaves in general refused to passively accept their bondage. The struggles of the slave woman in the sexual realm were a continuation of the resistance interlaced in the slave’s daily existence. As such, this was yet another form of insurgency, a response to a politically tinged sexual repression.

Even E. Franklin Frazier (who goes out of his way to defend the thesis that “the master in his mansion and his colored mistress in her special house nearby represented the final triumph of social ritual in the presence of the deepest feelings of human solidarity”⁴³) could not entirely ignore the black woman who fought back. He notes: “That physical compulsion was necessary at times to secure submission on the part of black women ... is supported by historical evidence and has been preserved in the tradition of Negro families.”⁴⁴

The sexual contest was one of many arenas in which the black woman had to prove herself as a warrior against oppression. What Frazier unwillingly concedes would mean that countless children brutally fathered by whites were conceived in the thick of battle. Frazier himself cites the story of a black woman whose great-grandmother, a former slave, would describe with great zest the battles behind all her numerous scars—that is, all save one. In response to questions concerning the unexplained scar, she had always simply said: “White men are as low as dogs, child, stay away from them.” The mystery was not unveiled until after the death of this brave woman: “She received

that scar at the hands of her master's youngest son, a boy of about eighteen years at the time she conceived their child, my grandmother Ellen."⁴⁵

An intricate and savage web of oppression intruded at every moment into the black woman's life during slavery. Yet a single theme appears at every juncture: the woman transcending, refusing, fighting back, asserting herself over and against terrifying obstacles. It was not her comrade brother against whom her incredible strength was directed. She fought alongside her man, accepting or providing guidance according to her talents and the nature of their tasks. She was in no sense an authoritarian figure; neither her domestic role nor her acts of resistance could relegate the man to the shadows. On the contrary, she herself had just been forced to leave behind the shadowy realm of female passivity in order to assume her rightful place beside the insurgent male.

This portrait cannot, of course, presume to represent every individual slave woman. It is rather a portrait of the potentials and possibilities inherent in the situation to which slave women were anchored. Invariably there were those who did not realize this potential. There were those who were indifferent and a few who were outright traitors. But certainly they were not the vast majority. The image of black women enchaining their men, cultivating relationships with the oppressor is a cruel fabrication which must be called by its right name. It is a dastardly ideological weapon designed to impair our capacity for resistance today by foisting upon us the ideal of male supremacy.

According to a time-honored principle, advanced by Marx, Lenin, Fanon and numerous other theorists, the status of women in any given society is a barometer measuring the overall level of social development. As Fanon has masterfully shown, the strength and efficacy of social struggles—and especially revolutionary movements—bear an immediate relationship to the range and quality of female participation.

The meaning of this principle is strikingly illustrated by the role of the black woman during slavery. Attendant to the indiscriminant brutal pursuit of profit, the slave woman attained a correspondingly brutal status of equality. But in practice, she could work up a fresh content for this deformed equality by inspiring and participating in acts of resistance of every form and color. She could turn the weapon of equality in struggle against the avaricious slave system which had engendered the mere caricature of equality in oppression. The black woman's activities increased the total incidence of anti-slavery assaults. But most important, without consciously rebellious black women, the theme of resistance could not have become so thoroughly intertwined in the fabric of daily existence. The status of black women within the community of slaves was definitely a barometer indicating the overall potential for resistance.

This process did not end with the formal dissolution of slavery. Under the impact of racism, the black woman has been continually constrained to inject herself into the desperate struggle for existence. She—like her man—has been compelled to work for wages, providing for her family as she was previously forced to provide for the slaveholding class. The infinitely onerous nature of this equality should never be overlooked. For the black woman has always also remained harnessed to the chores of the household. Yet, she could never be exhaustively defined by her uniquely "female" responsibilities.

As a result, black women have made significant contributions to struggles against the racism and the dehumanizing exploitation of a wrongly organized society. In fact, it would appear that the intense levels of resistance historically maintained by black people and thus the historical function of the Black Liberation Struggle as harbinger of change throughout the society are due in part to the greater objective equality between the black man and the black woman. Du Bois put it this way:

In the great rank and file of our five million women, we have the up-working of new

revolutionary ideals, which must in time have vast influence on the thought and action of this land.⁴⁶

Official and unofficial attempts to blunt the effects of the egalitarian tendencies as between the black man and woman should come as no surprise. The matriarch concept, embracing the clichéd “female castrator,” is, in the last instance, an open weapon of ideological warfare. Black men and women alike remain its potential victims—men unconsciously lunging at the woman, equating her with the myth; women sinking back into the shadows, lest an aggressive posture resurrect the myth in themselves.

The myth must be consciously repudiated as myth and the black woman in her true historical contours must be resurrected. We, the black women of today, must accept the full weight of a legacy wrought in blood by our mothers in chains. Our fight, while identical in spirit, reflects different conditions and thus implies different paths of struggle. But as heirs to a tradition of supreme perseverance and heroic resistance, we must hasten to take our place where ever our people are forging on towards freedom.

³⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York: Bantam Books, 1961, pp. 18–19.

⁴⁰ August Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, New York: Socialist Literature Co., 1910, p. 66–69.

⁴¹ Franz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, New York: Grove Press, 1967, p. 119.

⁴² Du Bois, *Darkwater*, p. 172.

⁴³ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1966 (1st ed., 1939), p. 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

⁴⁶ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, p. 185.

13.3 Combahee River Collective, The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. 1 During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows: (1) the genesis of contemporary Black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

1. The Genesis of Contemporary Black Feminism

Before looking at the recent development of Black feminism we would like to affirm that we find our origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation. Black women's extremely negative relationship to the American political system (a system of white male rule) has always been determined by our membership in two oppressed racial and sexual castes. As Angela Davis points out in "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," Black women have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to white male rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways. There have always been Black women activists—some known, like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, and thousands upon thousands unknown—who have had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggles unique. Contemporary Black feminism is the outgrowth of countless generations of personal sacrifice, militancy, and work by our mothers and sisters.

A Black feminist presence has evolved most obviously in connection with the second wave of the American women's movement beginning in the late 1960s. Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation. In 1973, Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a separate Black feminist group. This became the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO).

Black feminist politics also have an obvious connection to movements for Black liberation, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of us were active in those movements (Civil Rights, Black nationalism, the Black Panthers), and all of our lives were greatly affected and changed by their ideologies, their goals, and the tactics used to achieve their goals. It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was anti-racist, unlike those of white women, and anti-sexist, unlike those of Black and white men.

There is also undeniably a personal genesis for Black Feminism, that is, the political realization that comes from the seemingly personal experiences of individual Black women's lives. Black feminists and many more Black women who do not define themselves as feminists have all experienced sexual oppression as a constant factor in our day-to-day existence. As children we realized that we were different from boys and that we were treated differently. For example, we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being "ladylike" and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of white people. As we grew older we became aware of the threat of physical and sexual abuse by men. However, we had no way of conceptualizing what was so apparent to us, what we knew was really happening.

Black feminists often talk about their feelings of craziness before becoming conscious of the concepts of sexual politics, patriarchal rule, and most importantly, feminism, the political analysis and practice that we women use to struggle against our oppression. The fact that racial politics and indeed racism are pervasive factors in our lives did not allow us, and still does not allow most Black women, to look more deeply into our own experiences and, from that sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression. Our development must also be tied to the contemporary economic and political position of Black people. The post-World War II generation of Black youth was the first to be able to minimally partake of certain educational and employment options, previously closed completely to Black

people. Although our economic position is still at the very bottom of the American capitalistic economy, a handful of us have been able to gain certain tools as a result of tokenism in education and employment which potentially enable us to more effectively fight our oppression.

A combined anti-racist and anti-sexist position drew us together initially, and as we developed politically we addressed ourselves to heterosexism and economic oppression under capitalism.

2. What We Believe

Above all else, Our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's may because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. Merely naming the pejorative stereotypes attributed to Black women (e.g. mammy, matriarch, Sapphire, whore, bulldagger), let alone cataloguing the cruel, often murderous, treatment we receive, Indicates how little value has been placed upon our lives during four centuries of bondage in the Western hemisphere. We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work.

This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.

Although we are feminists and Lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.

We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labor force, while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable tokens at white-collar and

professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women.

A political contribution which we feel we have already made is the expansion of the feminist principle that the personal is political. In our consciousness-raising sessions, for example, we have in many ways gone beyond white women's revelations because we are dealing with the implications of race and class as well as sex. Even our Black women's style of talking/testifying in Black language about what we have experienced has a resonance that is both cultural and political. We have spent a great deal of energy delving into the cultural and experiential nature of our oppression out of necessity because none of these matters has ever been looked at before. No one before has ever examined the multilayered texture of Black women's lives. An example of this kind of revelation/conceptualization occurred at a meeting as we discussed the ways in which our early intellectual interests had been attacked by our peers, particularly Black males. We discovered that all of us, because we were "smart" had also been considered "ugly," i.e., "smart-ugly." "Smart-ugly" crystallized the way in which most of us had been forced to develop our intellects at great cost to our "social" lives. The sanctions in the Black and white communities against Black women thinkers is comparatively much higher than for white women, particularly ones from the educated middle and upper classes.

As we have already stated, we reject the stance of Lesbian separatism because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialized to be in this society: what they support, how they act, and how they oppress. But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, *per se*—i.e., their biological maleness—that makes them what they are. As Black women we find any type of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic. We must also question whether Lesbian separatism is an adequate and progressive political analysis and strategy, even for those who practice it, since it so completely denies any but the sexual sources of women's oppression, negating the facts of class and race.

3. Problems in Organizing Black Feminists

During our years together as a Black feminist collective we have experienced success and defeat, joy and pain, victory and failure. We have found that it is very difficult to organize around Black feminist issues, difficult even to announce in certain contexts that we are Black feminists. We have tried to think about the reasons for our difficulties, particularly since the white women's movement continues to be strong and to grow in many directions. In this section we will discuss some of the general reasons for the organizing problems we face and also talk specifically about the stages in organizing our own collective.

The major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions. We do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who possess any of these types of privilege have.

The psychological toll of being a Black woman and the difficulties this presents in reaching political consciousness and doing political work can never be underestimated. There is a very low

value placed upon Black women's psyches in this society, which is both racist and sexist. As an early group member once said, "We are all damaged people merely by virtue of being Black women." We are dispossessed psychologically and on every other level, and yet we feel the necessity to struggle to change the condition of all Black women. In "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," Michele Wallace arrives at this conclusion:

We exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle—because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world.¹

Wallace is pessimistic but realistic in her assessment of Black feminists' position, particularly in her allusion to the nearly classic isolation most of us face. We might use our position at the bottom, however, to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.

Feminism is, nevertheless, very threatening to the majority of Black people because it calls into question some of the most basic assumptions about our existence, i.e., that sex should be a determinant of power relationships. Here is the way male and female roles were defined in a Black nationalist pamphlet from the early 1970s:

We understand that it is and has been traditional that the man is the head of the house. He is the leader of the house/nation because his knowledge of the world is broader, his awareness is greater, his understanding is fuller and his application of this information is wiser... After all, it is only reasonable that the man be the head of the house because he is able to defend and protect the development of his home... Women cannot do the same things as men—they are made by nature to function differently. Equality of men and women is something that cannot happen even in the abstract world. Men are not equal to other men, i.e. ability, experience or even understanding. The value of men and women can be seen as in the value of gold and silver—they are not equal but both have great value. We must realize that men and women are a complement to each other because there is no house/family without a man and his wife. Both are essential to the development of any life.²

The material conditions of most Black women would hardly lead them to upset both economic and sexual arrangements that seem to represent some stability in their lives. Many Black women have a good understanding of both sexism and racism, but because of the everyday constrictions of their lives, cannot risk struggling against them both.

The reaction of Black men to feminism has been notoriously negative. They are, of course, even more threatened than Black women by the possibility that Black feminists might organize around our own needs. They realize that they might not only lose valuable and hardworking allies in their struggles but that they might also be forced to change their habitually sexist ways of interacting with and oppressing Black women. Accusations that Black feminism divides the Black struggle are powerful deterrents to the growth of an autonomous Black women's movement.

¹Wallace, Michele. "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," *The Village Voice*, 28 July 1975, pp. 6–7.

²Muminas of Committee for Unified Newark, *Mwanamke Mwananchi (The Nationalist Woman)*, Newark, N.J., 1971, pp. 4–5.

Still, hundreds of women have been active at different times during the three-year existence of our group. And every Black woman who came, came out of a strongly-felt need for some level of possibility that did not previously exist in her life.

When we first started meeting early in 1974 after the NBFO first eastern regional conference, we did not have a strategy for organizing, or even a focus. We just wanted to see what we had. After a period of months of not meeting, we began to meet again late in the year and started doing an intense variety of consciousness-raising. The overwhelming feeling that we had is that after years and years we had finally found each other. Although we were not doing political work as a group, individuals continued their involvement in Lesbian politics, sterilization abuse and abortion rights work, Third World Women's International Women's Day activities, and support activity for the trials of Dr. Kenneth Edelin, Joan Little, and Inéz García. During our first summer when membership had dropped off considerably, those of us remaining devoted serious discussion to the possibility of opening a refuge for battered women in a Black community. (There was no refuge in Boston at that time.) We also decided around that time to become an independent collective since we had serious disagreements with NBFO's bourgeois-feminist stance and their lack of a clear political focus.

We also were contacted at that time by socialist feminists, with whom we had worked on abortion rights activities, who wanted to encourage us to attend the National Socialist Feminist Conference in Yellow Springs. One of our members did attend and despite the narrowness of the ideology that was promoted at that particular conference, we became more aware of the need for us to understand our own economic situation and to make our own economic analysis.

In the fall, when some members returned, we experienced several months of comparative inactivity and internal disagreements which were first conceptualized as a Lesbian-straight split but which were also the result of class and political differences. During the summer those of us who were still meeting had determined the need to do political work and to move beyond consciousness-raising and serving exclusively as an emotional support group. At the beginning of 1976, when some of the women who had not wanted to do political work and who also had voiced disagreements stopped attending of their own accord, we again looked for a focus. We decided at that time, with the addition of new members, to become a study group. We had always shared our reading with each other, and some of us had written papers on Black feminism for group discussion a few months before this decision was made. We began functioning as a study group and also began discussing the possibility of starting a Black feminist publication. We had a retreat in the late spring which provided a time for both political discussion and working out interpersonal issues. Currently we are planning to gather together a collection of Black feminist writing. We feel that it is absolutely essential to demonstrate the reality of our politics to other Black women and believe that we can do this through writing and distributing our work. The fact that individual Black feminists are living in isolation all over the country, that our own numbers are small, and that we have some skills in writing, printing, and publishing makes us want to carry out these kinds of projects as a means of organizing Black feminists as we continue to do political work in coalition with other groups.

4. Black Feminist Issues and Projects

During our time together we have identified and worked on many issues of particular relevance to Black women. The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon the lives of women, Third World and working people. We are of course particularly committed to working on those struggles in which race, sex, and class are simultaneous factors in oppression.

We might, for example, become involved in workplace organizing at a factory that employs Third World women or picket a hospital that is cutting back on already inadequate health care to a Third World community, or set up a rape crisis center in a Black neighborhood. Organizing around welfare and daycare concerns might also be a focus. The work to be done and the countless issues that this work represents merely reflect the pervasiveness of our oppression.

Issues and projects that collective members have actually worked on are sterilization abuse, abortion rights, battered women, rape and health care. We have also done many workshops and educationals on Black feminism on college campuses, at women's conferences, and most recently for high school women.

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As Black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.

In the practice of our politics we do not believe that the end always justifies the means. Many reactionary and destructive acts have been done in the name of achieving "correct" political goals. As feminists we do not want to mess over people in the name of politics. We believe in collective process and a nonhierarchical distribution of power within our own group and in our vision of a revolutionary society. We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through criticism and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice. In her introduction to *Sisterhood is Powerful* Robin Morgan writes:

I haven't the faintest notion what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfill, since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested-interest-power.

As Black feminists and Lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us.

Week 14

Reinvention and Critique of the Black Nation Thesis

The American Communist Party suffered a decline in power and prestige in the post-WWII period. The USSR's fall from grace in the minds of many Communists (for reasons already discussed) was only one contributing factor. Another major reason was state repression: the Second Red Scare featured Senator Joseph McCarthy as the figurehead of a sweeping crackdown on actual or suspected Communists.

Despite these blows, the legacy of the Communist Party persisted both in theory and in practice, even if outside the party proper. Many militants who had been trained in the CP (or organizationally and ideologically similar groups) drew on their previous experience to orient their politics. The history of the CP would continue to remain an important leftist reference point.

Newly exposed to Old Left ideas via PLP and thereby RYM and RYM2, a subset of the New Left took up anti-revisionist politics after the implosion of SDS following its 1969 convention. Dissatisfied by the lack of intellectual rigor, discipline and commitment of the non-Marxist New Left, these new Marxists were attracted to an ideology that stressed the potential of nationalism, the importance of anti-imperialism and the legitimacy of armed struggle.

These Old Left and New Left strains would combine to form a constellation of groups collectively known as the New Communist Movement (NCM). The remaining two weeks feature readings from organizations that fell under the NCM umbrella.

The Communist League (CL) was a majority-Black anti-revisionist group based in Southern California around former CPUSA member Nelson Peery. When the League of Revolutionary Black Workers fell apart, the CL incorporated some of the remnants into its organization. The Communist League believed a strength of its organization's thinking to be the "Negro National Colonial Question"; its analysis drew on the CP's Black Belt thesis.

The Racism Research Project was a group centered around theorist Harry Chang. In "Critique of the Black Nation Thesis," his only published political work, he examines both the intellectual legitimacy of the Black Belt thesis as well as the reasons for its periodic revival in left-wing circles.

The Congress of African People began as a Black cultural nationalist group but evolved into a Maoist political party. Its defense of the Black Belt thesis from Chang's attacks follows Chang's piece.

14.1 Communist League, Negro National Colonial Question (1972)

Slavery in the Western Hemisphere or Latifundist (Capitalist) and Patriarchal (Pre-Capitalist) Slavery and the Evolution of the Negro Nation

Everything, including the growth of the Negro Nation, is rooted in the past. Therefore, it is necessary to get a clear perspective and understanding of the past in order to understand the present.

The Negro question as a specific of social motion and class struggle in the United States of North America, is rooted in the type of slave system which developed in the Black Belt. Therefore, it is essential that we understand why Negro slavery in the Black Belt was what it was, in order to understand why the Negro Nation and the Negro liberation struggle exist in their present forms.

A comprehensive study of slavery in the Western Hemisphere would fill volumes of inquiry. Such a study would be beyond our ability or intent. Rather, this section will be limited to a comparison of the two different types of slavery that developed in Brazil and the Black Belt area of the U.S.N.A.; the historical results of these different types will be briefly outlined.

Social systems are transitional and cannot exist in a pure form. In the Black Belt of the U.S.N.A. and in certain areas of Brazil, there arose a latifundist (capitalist) slavery—a slavery that produced for the international market—a slavery that essentially was a commodity producing, brutal, savage form of capitalism. In the border states of the South and in the majority of the slave areas of Brazil, there arose an essentially different form of exploitation—that was patriarchal slavery—a slavery that functioned to serve the needs of the master and his household and produced for the local market. In the main this patriarchal slavery constituted a precapitalist social relation, in so much as capitalist commodity production for an international market was not the main function of this system, as we shall see.

To begin, let's examine the patriarchal slave form as it developed in Brazil. Gilberto Freyre's book, *The Masters and the Slaves*, presents a clear picture of the development of slavery and the role it played in the development of Brazilian society.

First of all, Freyre clearly shows that the Brazilian slaveholder was forced by historical conditions and the circumstances of social life on the plantation, to base slavery on some rationale other than white supremacy. Freyre writes, "Roy Nash in *The Conquest of Brazil*, states, the fact that the Brazilian colonizer, before exerting an imperial sway over colored races had in his own turn experienced the domination of a dark-skinned people superior to the Hispano-Goths in organization and in technique." "Under such circumstances," writes Nash, "it would be deemed an honor for the white to marry or mate with the governing class, the brown man instead of the reverse."¹ (This paragraph refers to the domination of the Iberian tribes by the dark-skinned Moorish people of North Africa.)

And further:

Meanwhile, it may be stated that the brown-skinned woman was preferred by the Portuguese for the purposes of love, at least for purposes of physical love. With reference to Brazil, as an old saying has it, 'white woman for marriage, mulatto woman for fucking, Negro woman for work.' Moreover, in our national lyricism, there is no tendency more clearly revealed than one toward a glorification of the mulatto woman, the cabocla or Indian woman, the brown-skinned or brunette type, celebrated for the beauty of her eyes, the whiteness of her teeth, for her wiles and languishments and bewitching ways, far more than are the 'pale virgins' and the 'blonde damsels.'²

As we will demonstrate later, this relative lack of white supremacy or rigid segregation during the Portuguese conquest and enslavement of the native Indians and Africans was not due to accidents of color in Portuguese history. The absence of this particular social practice was due more to the relative absence of the capitalist content of slavery in Brazil.

What then was the rationale for slavery in Brazil? It was the same as that used in early slavery in the U.S.N.A. That rationale was to bring the heathen Africans to God. Slavery was the only possible way for them to atone for their heathenness.

This is not to imply that the feudalistic and patriarchal slave masters of Brazil were not cruel to their slaves. Freyre reports that many slave bones have been dug up from the basements or gardens of old slave manors. These slaves were executed and buried by their masters despite "strict" Brazilian laws prohibiting the murder or severe torture of slaves. (This law was based on the fact that master and slave alike were of the Catholic faith.)

Not only were the Brazilian slave masters brutal with their slaves it was common for them to treat their own children in a similar if not more sadistic manner than their slaves. Again, Freyre relates that special punishments designed to emphasize pain were frequently administered to children and such things as head rappings and lashings with Grama grass were common disciplinary measures. A graphic example of master brutality to slave and son alike was reported as follows by Freyre:

The Viscount of Suassuna on his estate at Pombal had caused to be buried in the gardens more than one Negro victim of his patriarchal justice. There is nothing surprising about this, for there were those who even had their own sons put to death. One of the patriarchs, Pedro Vieira, by that time a grandfather, upon discovering that his son was having relations with a favorite slave girl, had him slain by an older brother.³

In the patriarchal areas of Brazil, unlike the Black Belt region of the U.S.N.A. South, there was no monoculture of any major significance. In other words, there were few vast regions in which only one or two crops were raised primarily for export, as was the case for tobacco, cotton and rice in the U.S.N.A. Black Belt. Today's extensive Brazilian cotton and sugar cane and coffee plantations did not exist during the development of the slave system in some areas of Brazil. Since Brazilian patriarchal slave society was not organized around commodity production of single "cash" crops, plantation life tended to be a little slower and the slaves were not so tightly segregated or so systematically worked to death as in the U.S.N.A., where the drive for surplus value often killed the average Black Belt slave in less than seven working years.

The reason that a capitalist slavery could not develop to any great extent in Brazil was that Portugal itself was not a developed capitalist country. The reason that Portugal was not a developed capitalist country was, because it was a British protectorate. Portugal was an independent sovereign state, but remained controlled by Britain; "Great Britain has protected Portugal and her colonies in order to fortify her own positions in the fight against her rivals, Spain and France."⁴

In the history of Brazilian slavery, we see over and over again, the feudal paternalism that suited that specific type of slavery. Freyre points out in his preface, "A widely practiced miscegenation here tended to modify the enormous social distance that otherwise would have been preserved between Big House and tropical forest, between Big House and slave hut. What latifundary monoculture based upon slavery accomplished in the way of creating an aristocracy, by dividing Brazilian society into two extremes, of gentry and slaves, with a thin and insignificant remnant of free men sandwiched in between, was in good part offset by the social effects of miscegenation. The Indian woman and the Negro woman, in the beginning, and later the mulatto, the cabocla, the quadroon, and the

octoroon, becoming domestics, concubines, even the lawful wives of their white masters, exerted a powerful influence for social democracy in Brazil. A considerable portion of the big landed estates was divided among the mestizo sons, legitimate or illegitimate, procreated by those white fathers and tended to break up the feudal allotments and latifundia that were small kingdoms.”⁵

Contrast this with the Yankee slave owner, who whip in hand offered his bastard slave children up for sale to the highest bidder. The Yankee masters’ bourgeois nature wiped away any sentimentality that might have normally shown through considering that to be “sold down the river” meant a short ugly life of maltreatment and overwork that was ended by an untimely death. The answer did not lie in the nationality of the slave owners, but in the specifics of the slave system in each country.

Further Freyre states:

I believe it may be stated that from the point of view of nutrition, that most salutary influence in the Brazilian development has been that of the African Negro, both with respect to the valuable food products that through him have come to us from the land of his origin, and with respect to his own diet, which was better balanced than that of the white man—at least in this country, under slavery. If I make this qualification, it is because the plantation owners in Brazil had their own variety of Taylorism,⁶ by which they endeavored to obtain from the Negro slave, purchased at a dear price, the maximum of useful effort and not merely a maximum of labor for their money.⁷

Finally, Freyre quotes from the letter of a person who was visiting in Bahia, Brazil to illustrate the “unusual” treatment of slaves under the conditions of patriarchal slavery:

There is here so dominant a passion for keeping Negroes and mulattoes in the house, that once a *cria* is born, he does not leave the house until death takes him. There are many families that have within doors sixty, seventy or more unnecessary persons. I am here speaking of the city, for in the country, this would not be surprising.⁸

What were the conditions of slavery in the Black Belt area of the Southern U.S.N.A. compared to those described above? In general, slavery in the Southern region of the U.S.N.A. was justified by the rationale of white supremacy. Strict segregation of field hands was maintained and no extra house slaves were allowed as they were in Brazil. In addition, Black Belt slave masters had a scientific knowledge (based on statistics published by organized slave owners societies) of just how long a slave would last under given conditions.

Masters used slave labor in a manner calculated to maximize profits. This practice made Black Belt slavery an indescribable horror. There was nothing in Black Belt slavery to compare with the Brazilian slave policy of drawing out “maximum effort.” This policy allowed the slave to earn his freedom under the protection of ecclesiastical as well as secular laws, and to escape much of the abuse that resulted from white supremacist capitalist slavery.

This comparison between capitalist slavery in the Black Belt and patriarchal slavery in Brazil would not be complete without some indication of the life of overwork of the slave on the cotton plantation in the U.S.N.A. One of the best accounts comes from the celebrated work of Soloman Northrup:

During all these hoeings the overseer or driver follows the slaves with a whip, such as has been described. The fastest hoer takes the lead row. He is usually about a rod in advance of his companions. If one of them passes him, he is whipped. If one falls behind or is a moment idle, he is whipped. In fact, the lash is flying from morning until night the whole day long.

The hands are required to be in the cotton field as soon as it is light in the morning, and, with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see and when the moon is full they often times labor till the middle of the night.⁹

Karl Marx also described the conditions of slavery in the U.S.N.A. Black Belt:

The slave-owner buys his labourer as he buys his horse. If he loses his slave, he loses capital that can only be restored by new outlay in the slave-mart. But the rice-grounds of Georgia, or the swamps of the Mississippi may be fatally injurious to the human constitution; but the waste of human life which the cultivation of these districts necessitates, is not so great that it cannot be repaired from the teaming preserves of Virginia and Kentucky. Considerations of economy, moreover, which, under a natural system, afford some security for humane treatment by identifying the master's interest with the slaves, when once trading in slaves is practised, become reasons for racking to the uttermost the toil of the slave; for, when his place can at once be supplied from foreign preserves, the duration of his life becomes a matter of less moment than its productiveness while it lasts. It is accordingly a maxim of slave management, in slave-importing countries, that the most effective economy is that which takes out of the human chattel in the shortest space of time the utmost amount of exertion it is capable of putting forth. It is in tropical culture, where annual profits of often equal for the whole capital of plantations, that Negro life is most recklessly sacrificed.¹⁰

In this period, Woodson and Wesley report, that in the Cotton Belt, a slave owner would have to purchase five slaves per year for every thirty that he owned in order to maintain the original number. So severe were the working conditions, that the slave women for the most part could not bear children.

The expression "sold down the river" had a dreadful meaning among the slaves in the areas bordering the Black Belt to the North. These areas, especially Virginia and Kentucky were slave breeding areas and farm production was for the local market and conditions in the field were tolerable. Whenever a slave trader from the Black Belt appeared on these farms, there was terror in the slave quarters, for all the slaves knew they could expect a short, hard life "down the river." In fact the average life expectancy of a slave in the border areas was 55 years. In the Black Belt, the average was only seven years of labor.

Slaves who began to work in the Black Belt fields at the prime age of 17, could be expected to live only seven years after that. Fifteen percent of the slave children died from overwork and maltreatment, before they were nine years old.

Marx further explains slavery under capitalism:

But as soon as people, whose production still moves within the lower forms of slave labour, corvee-labour etc., are drawn into the whirlpool of an international market dominated by the capitalist mode of production, the sale of their products for export becoming their principal interest, the civilized horrors of overwork are grafted on the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom etc. Hence, the Negro labour in the Southern states of the American Union preserved something of a patriarchal character, so long as production was chiefly directed to immediate local consumption. But, in proportion, as the export of cotton became of vital interest to these states, the over working of the Negro and sometimes the using up of his life in 7 years labour, became a factor in a calculated and calculating system.¹¹

Here at one blow, Marx clearly sets forth the Character of Anglo-American slavery in North America in distinction to the slavery of other areas in the Americas. Slavery in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies—apart from the overwork in the mines, was a distinctive patriarchal slavery and was never a big factor in the world market. Marx says, “It is, however, clear that in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange value but the use value of the product predominated, the surplus-labour will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and that here no boundless thirst for surplus-labour arises from the nature of the production itself. Hence in antiquity, overwork becomes horrible only when the object is to obtain exchange value in its specific independent money form; in the production of gold and silver. Compulsory working to death is here the recognized form of overwork.”¹² This was the situation in the mines of Peru, Bolivia etc. While English ships transported the commodities of cotton, sugar etc.—which reflected the commodity-capitalist production and wealth—Spanish ships transported little but gold, silver and precious stones. This is a reflection of Iberian feudalism whose commercial interest was limited to the money form of commodities.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx shows the decisive role of slavery in the U.S.N.A. in the development of capitalism: “Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their values; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance.”

Without slavery, North America, the most progressive of countries would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe out North America from the map of the world, and you will have anarchy—the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Abolish slavery and you will have wiped America off the map of nations.¹³

Further in *Capital*, Marx continues, “Whilst the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage workers in Europe needed for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world.”¹⁴

It is clear that this “commercial exploitation” of the slave system in the U.S.N.A. developed parallel with the rise of industrial capitalism. At the same time, slavery in the U.S.N.A. was the wellspring of value so necessary for the development of capitalism. This marked slavery in the Black Belt as latifundist-capitalist slavery—in contrast with patriarchal pre-capitalist slavery in most areas of Brazil.

Capitalism is the commodity producing society where human labor itself appears on the market as a commodity. Simply because this labor is sold all at once, does not change the character of the exploitation of that labor. Marx points out:

The process of production, considered on the one hand as the unity of the labour-process and the process of creating value is the production of commodities; considered on the other hand, as the unity of the labour process and the process of producing surplus-value, it is the capitalist process of production, or capitalist production of commodities.¹⁵

From this scientific point of view, the only possible conclusion is that latifundist slavery in the U.S.N.A. was a form of capitalism, a commodity producing society, where the labor did not appear on the market as free labor. Social systems do not appear in a vacuum and therefore none have

appeared in a pure form. It is the petty bourgeois intellectuals' search for laboratory purity in social systems that has prevented them and through them prevented the revolutionaries from seeing the slavery in the Black Belt as capitalist slavery and therefore, exposing the secret of the genesis of the Negro National Question.¹⁶

The objective conditions of the production of cotton and tobacco, the constant clearing of the land, the harsh conditions of life of the workers, the frontiers and free land, all demanded un-free labor to feed the whirlpool of international commercial intercourse. The form was slavery the content was capitalism.

At the ending of slavery in Brazil, the patriarchal slave system melted into the capitalist system and the slaves became the Brazilian proletariat. No separate national development based upon the slave population occurred. The feudal patriarchal slavery, because its market was local and exchange value not the sole aim of production, did not allow for the consolidation of the nation. Because "a nation is not merely a historical category, but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism,"¹⁷ there was no need to solidify a market and so the slaves of Brazil never were stabilized by economic cohesion. As Freyre reports; "The slaves' place was taken by the pariah of the factory, the slave hut was replaced by the slums and the plantation master by the factory owner and absentee capitalist."¹⁸

Not so in the U.S.N.A., as Marx pointed out above; the development of the Industrial Revolution in England created an insatiable demand for cotton. This demand of the world market for cotton and other agricultural commodities, led to the development of a monoculture in the U.S.N.A. Black Belt, that demanded the brutal white supremacist concentration, oppression, separation and commercial exploitation of the slaves. These conditions and internal contradictions which were unique to the Black Belt area, laid the foundation for the emergence of the modern Negro Nation.

¹ Freyre, Gilberto, *The Masters and the Slaves*. Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1956, pp. 11–12

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ Freyre, Gilberto, op. cit., p. 416

⁴ Lenin, V.I., *Imperialism. The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1965, p. 102

⁵ Freyre, Gilberto, op. cit., p. 64

⁶ Taylorism—After the industrial engineer, Taylor. A system of scientific organization of labor so employed as to do away with any unnecessary motions on the part of the laborer. (See, Leontiev, *Political Economy. A Beginner's Course*. Inter. Pub., N.Y., p. 116)

⁷ Freyre, Gilberto, op. cit., p. 65

⁸ Freyre, Gilberto, op. cit., p. 429

⁹ Aptheker, Herbert, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. Citadel Press, N.Y., 1967, p. 248

¹⁰ Marx, Karl, *Capital*. F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1961, p. 266, (Quoted from Cairnes, "The Slave Power" pp. 110–111)

¹¹ Marx Ibid. p. 236.

¹² Marx Ibid. p. 235.

¹³ Marx, Karl, "The Poverty of Philosophy," *Handbook of Marxism*. Martin Lawrence Ltd., London, 1935, pp. 356–357.

¹⁴ Marx, Karl, *Capital*. F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1961, p. 795

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 197

¹⁶ In fact the hiring out of slaves was common practice in the South. "Almost every railroad in the

ante-bellum South was built at least in part by bondsmen; in Georgia they constructed more than a thousand miles of roadbed. In 1858, a Louisiana newspaper concluded: Negro labor is fast taking the place of white labor in the construction of southern railroads.

“Until the 1840’s, the famed Tredegar Iron Company in Richmond used free labor almost exclusively. But in 1842, Joseph R. Anderson, then commercial agent of the company, proposed to employ slaves as a means of cutting labor costs. The board of directors approved of his plan, and within two years Anderson was satisfied with the practicability of the scheme. In 1847, the increasing use of slaves caused the remaining free laborers to go out on strike, until they were threatened with prosecution for forming an illegal combination. After this protest failed, Anderson vowed that he would show his workers that they could not dictate his labor policies: he refused to re-employ any of the strikers. Thereafter, as Anderson noted, Tredegar used ‘almost exclusively slave labor except as the Boss men. This enabled me of course, to compete with other manufacturers.’ ” (Stampp, Kenneth M., *The Peculiar Institution*. Vintage Books, N.Y., 1956, p. 62)

¹⁷ Stalin, Joseph, “Marxism and the National Question,” *Selections from V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin on National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, Calcutta, 1970.

¹⁸ Freyre, Gilberto, op. cit., p. V in the introduction.

The Civil War in the United States of North America—Its Aims, Causes and Results

Due to the confusion that still persists as regards the cause and effects of the Civil War in the U.S.N.A., the editors are putting forth Marxist conclusions as regards the War. Serious students of the War should study the articles and letters of Marx and Engels on the War. The richest source is *The Civil War in the United States* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Above and beyond all other considerations, the Civil War was as Marx wrote, “a war of conquest for the extension and perpetuation of slavery.”¹ It is in this sense of the word that Marx and Engels point out that the Civil War was a war between two social systems. Marx and Engels point out how the Union was of service to the slave oligarchy only so long as it served the slave system. As the contradictions between the system of slave labor and the system of free labor intensified and the balance of political power tilted against the slave system, it became clear that 20,000,000 free men would no longer submit to the dictatorship of the 300,000 slave masters who controlled the country.² It was at this point that the slave oligarchy first attacked the South and subdued it and then attacked the North.

The Aims of the Contending Forces

The slave oligarchy understood that if secession was attained by the core of deep Southern slave states, the economic and social interests of the entire Mississippi basin and even of California would compel them to join the slavery Union—thus, as Marx points out, their aim was to reorganize the Union on the basis of slavery, not to dissolve it. The inevitable result of such a reorganization would be the introduction of slavery and serfdom for the Anglo-American workers of the North and West. On the side of the Union, all the moral and political forces that were generated by the long hard struggle of the yeoman farmers and the financial and industrial bourgeoisie against the restrictive dictatorship of the slaveocracy momentarily joined.

The farmers who could not compete against slave labor readily joined the struggle. The workers, who as a result of competition from slave production were being forced down to the level of slavery themselves, also joined the fight. The industrial and financial bourgeoisie, drunk with their new

political and financial power rushed into the battle. Of course, in history, the underlying economic causes are always covered up by surface, ideological proclamations. Thus the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” with its fevered, “As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,” became the clarion call of the Union forces.

John Brown, in his long struggle to force the South to break the Union knew that the gigantic economic forces of the North would be the trump card to force the South back into the Union without slavery. What started as a reactionary war of conquest was, for a historical moment, turned into a true revolution—the Slaveocracy fighting to hold back the wheels of progress, the forces of the Union objectively fighting to free the means of production from the fetters that slave landlordism had placed upon them.

The Political Motion that Precipitated the War

In history, it is clear that the election of Lincoln was the signal for the secession of the Confederate states. However, that begs the question, what allowed for the election of Lincoln?

Lincoln was elected because of the political growth of the Northwest. The growth of the Northwest caused a split in the Democratic Party and the result was the election of Lincoln? How did this take place?

First of all, the economics of slavery demand the constant expansion of slavery into fresh and fertile soils—that meant the westward motion of the slave system. Since the Executive branch and the Judicial branch of the government was firmly in the hands of the slavers, the only struggle that could take place was in the Legislative branch. The slave oligarchy slowly eroded the power of the House of Representatives and made the Senate the more powerful body, because the North became, by far the most populous. But that also meant that as new territories became states they had to go into the slavers political pocket. This was easily accomplished in Texas and New Mexico. In Missouri (1820), the famous compromise was worked out where in Missouri entered the Union as a slave state, but slavery was excluded west of the Missouri and north of 36 degrees 30 minutes latitude. Then in 1854, hard pressed to expand slavery, the Southern dominated legislature and the Senate passed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill which repealed the Missouri Compromise and left it up to the citizens of the territories to decide if or not they wanted the slave system.

When it became apparent that the free soil immigrants and the yeoman farmers were capable of fighting for their rights against slavery, the oligarchy had to try again. John Brown and his men were the best example of the capabilities of the free men to resist slavery. A huge relief organization was formed to arm and protect the free men from the murder and intimidation of the border ruffians who were the vanguard of the slavers. Kansas was saved for free labor. Out of this struggle and this relief organization grew the Republican Party.

The slavers then turned to the base of their political strength, the Supreme Court. In 1857, the Supreme Court presented the Dred Scott decision. This infamous decision stated that the government had the duty to protect Slave property in any territory. So, against the expressed will of the majority all territories became slave territories. As Marx wrote:

If the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had extended the geographical boundary-line of slavery in the Territories, if the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 had wiped out every geographical boundary-line and set up a political barrier instead, the will of the majority of the settlers, then the Supreme Court of the United States, by its decision of 1857, tore down even this political barrier and transformed all the territories of the republic,

present and future, from places for the cultivation of free states into places for the cultivation of slavery.³

Thus the Supreme Court and the Executive office under Buchanan sought to win in Washington what they had lost in battle with John Brown. Steven Douglas, leader of the Northern Democrats broke with the South because the Dred Scott decision contradicted the principle of sovereignty as defined in the Nebraska Bill of 1854. Thus the Democratic Party was fundamentally split. The Republicans at the second convention (1860) declared their platform was: not a foot of new territory is to be conceded to the slave empire. The irrepressible conflict was breaking out. At the Montgomery secessionist Congress (1860) a short time later, Senator Toombs, the leading spokesman for the South said, "In fifteen years more, without a great increase in slave territory, either the slaves must be permitted to flee from the whites, or the whites must flee from the slaves."⁴

Thus the issue was joined. During the election of 1860 the Democrats got 2,223,110 votes, the Republicans got 1,866,452. But the Democratic vote was split, Douglas received 1,375,157 and Breckinridge, 847,953. Lincoln was elected, the Union was out of the hands of the oligarchy and the slave power wheeled from political activity, prepared a military Bonapartist coup and attacked the Union. Thus Kansas took her revenge. It was Kansas that birthed the Republican Party and split the Democrats and thus insured the election of Lincoln and the resultant Civil War.

The Underlying Causes

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces come into contradiction with the existing productive relationships, or, what is but a legal expression for these, with the property relationships within which they had moved before. From forms of development of the productive forces these relationships are transformed into their fetters. Then an epoch of social revolution opens.⁵

So wrote Karl Marx. The Civil War in the U.S.N.A. completely proved him correct. In a footnote to the "Poverty of Philosophy," Engels states,

(in 1847) the world trade of the United States was limited to the import of immigrants and industrial products, and the export of cotton and tobacco, that is, of the products of slave labor. The Northern states produced principally corn and meat for the slave states. It was only when the North produced corn and meat for export and also became an industrial country, and when the American cotton monopoly had to face powerful competition in India, Egypt, Brazil, etc., that the abolition of slavery became possible.⁶

Marx writes,

Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry.

Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance.⁷

So we see that at a point of its growth, slavery, which made the colonies of value, became the fetter on the further development of the productive forces. And thus it was overthrown. It was not the morality of the anti-slave movement that was fundamental, but it was the conflict between the

productive forces and the productive relations that made the “irrepressible conflict” explode into what at that time was the bloodiest and costliest conflict in civilized history.

So we see that the Civil War was not an exceptional event in history, but a moment in history that completely conforms to the Marxist laws of social development.

At the end of this costly and bloody affair, and its epilogue, the period of Reconstruction, there had emerged in the North a financial oligarchy whose blood lust and financial power put to shame the wildest dreams of the slavers. Dr. Du Bois noted with sadness, the South controlled the Nation and Wall Street controlled the South. The end result of the Civil War and the gigantic accumulation of financial capital and industrial means of production was the emergence of United States of North America imperialism, the scourge of finance capital. Its first creation and first victim of its savage gold lust was the defenseless and prostrate Negro Nation.

¹ Marx, Karl, Engels, Frederick, *The Civil War in the United States*, International Publishers, N.Y., 1937, p. 73

² “In 1860, there were in the South 385,000 owners of slaves distributed among 1,516,000 free families. Nearly three-fourths of all free Southerners had no connection with slavery through either family ties or direct ownership. The ‘typical’ Southerner was not only a small farmer, but also a non-slave-holder.” (Kenneth Stamp, op. cit., p. 30)

“Slightly less than half of the slaves belong to approximately twenty-five thousand masters operating plantations of these (large) dimensions.” (Kenneth Stamp, op. cit., p. 38)

³ Marx, Karl, Engels, Frederick, op. cit., p. 63

⁴ Marx, Karl, Engels, Frederick, op. cit., p. 67

⁵ Marx, Karl, “Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy,” Selected Works. Vol. I, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1962, p. 363

⁶ Marx, Karl, “Poverty of Philosophy” (footnote to, F.E.) *Handbook of Marxism*. Martin Lawrence Ltd., London, 1937, p.

⁷ Marx, Karl, op. cit., pp. 356–357

From the Negro Bourgeois Democratic National Movement to the Negro People’s Liberation Movement

Any real analysis of the Negro people’s movement has to begin by seeing it as an integral part of the international revolutionary upsurge of the colonial peoples against imperialism. In the Communist League we use as our base the historic as well as the political conclusions of the October Revolution.

Stalin points out:

Thus the October Revolution, having put an end to the old bourgeois movement for national emancipation, inaugurated the era of a new, socialist movement of the workers and peasants of the oppressed nationalities, directed against all oppression, which also means national oppression, against the rule of the bourgeoisie, their own and foreign, and against imperialism in general.¹

Further Stalin states:

It became obvious that the emancipation of the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with

imperialism, without the overthrow by each of its 'Own' national bourgeoisie and the assumption of power by the toiling masses themselves.²

It is obvious that no national bourgeoisie can successfully lead a movement of national liberation, just as it is obvious that in this period of its extreme parasitism, imperialism will not peacefully allow any colonial nation, especially a small nation, an independent existence.

Therefore, in our discussion of the Negro movement we will divide history into two parts; 1) the period prior to the October Revolution in the Soviet Union which we call the Negro Bourgeois Democratic National Movement, and 2) the post 1917 period which we call the Negro People's Liberation Movement. (In general, this division conforms to the whole of the colonial emancipation movement. However, the People's Liberation Movement as such actually began more in 1922 than in 1917. Nevertheless, the shift in political forces was the result of the October Revolution.)

Due to the years of confusion on the Negro question, it is necessary to answer the question, how and why did the Negro Bourgeois Democratic National Movement arise? We have already indicated the difference that existed between the patriarchal slavery in some areas of Brazil and certain other areas of Hispanic America and the capitalist slavery that existed in the areas owned or controlled by England, the most advanced of the capitalist countries. Basically, and in the long run that difference is the reason why it became inevitable that the slaves of Brazil became the proletariat and the slaves of the United States of North America (in the Black Belt) developed toward nationhood and a national movement.

Let us examine the political and military conditions that existed at the end of the Civil War. Firstly, in President Johnson, who became president in 1865 after Lincoln's assassination, the landlord planters had a firm ally. At his invitation scores of former Southern members of the House of Representatives and the Senate showed up to reclaim their seats in Congress. Had they succeeded, the political battle would have been decisively won by the Confederacy. Johnson forbade the moves by some democratic generals to implement the military victory of the North. He removed all Negro military organizations from the South and allowed the re-grouping of military organizations of the Confederacy. These military battalions roamed the countryside, pillaging, looting and murdering the Negro people. One of many examples, was the Hamberg, South Carolina Massacre. There, a military unit in civilian dress commanded by General Butler received cannon and heavy weapons from the Federal arsenal at Augusta, Ga. With these weapons he conducted the massacre at Hamberg as well as pillaging and looting throughout South Carolina. (See Woodson and Wesley, *The Negro in Our History*. Associated Publishers, N.Y., 1966, p. 415)

In a real sense, the planter-landlords never lost military supremacy in the South. After the defeat of the Confederacy in conventional warfare, the armed struggle assumed other forms. One of these forms was the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK, as it is called carried out widespread intimidation of the masses. The KKK combined with other terrorist extra-legal organizations, and the Confederate military units were the forerunners of Hitler's Brown Shirts and Storm Troopers, with exactly the same division of labor between them. General Sheridan estimated that 3,500 Negroes were killed in the first decade after "emancipation."

Other estimates range up to 10,000 the first year. At any rate, the truth is that these armed bands and military units roamed the countryside, surrounding encampments of Negroes and carrying out orgies of hangings, burnings at the stake, whippings and all manners of torture and mass murder. Throughout the South "race riots" were instigated that left whole sections of villages and towns burned and thousands of Negroes dead from mob violence. Clearly, the Negro people were being driven back into slavery. The sheer horror and violence of this first stage of the counterrevolution was

a blood soaked testament of the great democratic upsurge of the Negro and poor Anglo-American masses.

The massed conventional armies of the Confederacy were clearly defeated in the field. The surrender of General Lee at Appomattox was the formal recognition of this fact. War, however, is the extension of politics by other means and there is much in history to show that winning the military victory in no way assures the political ends. Actually the specific property relations in the North and the South put the victorious Northern bourgeoisie in a difficult position. On the one hand they did not dare disturb the capitalist property relations of the South, on the other hand they had to break the political power of the landlord-planters who still dominated the Judicial branch of the government through the Supreme Court whose justices were appointed by pre-war presidents who represented and were loyal to the slave powers.

Through President Johnson, who remained loyal to the slave owners, the slave power also continued to dominate the Executive branch. The decisive fight was being made in the Legislative branch. The landlord-planters of the South were making a strong effort to take over the House of Representatives and the Senate. This was feasible because the voting restrictions of the South allowed only pro-landlord votes to be cast, the Negroes and the vast majority of the poor Anglo-Americans were not allowed to vote. Thus, by the beginning of 1869 it was clear that the planters were winning the political-battle against the financial capitalists of the North.

As a result the financial capitalists of the North raised the battle cry of "the Revolution is in danger." In response to this call stepped forward the petty bourgeois radicals. The political leadership of the revolution slipped into their hands. The best representatives of these latter day Robespierres were Thaddeus Stevens, Frederick Douglass, Charles Sumner and Wendell Phillips. These radical democrats had the decisive task of enfranchising the freedmen so that the Southern political base, represented by pro-landlord votes would be denied the landlords. It was this need to crush the political resistance of the landlord-planters, and this need alone, that dictated the period of reconstruction.

For the moment, the needs of the Northern financial capitalists and the needs of the Negro people to some extent coincided. The Negro people and the poor Anglo-Americans of the South became pawns in what has been named the "Battle for Democracy." (See Allen, *Reconstruction, The Battle for Democracy*, International Publishers, N.Y., 1937) In fact, it was a war where the rules were, heads I win; tails you lose.

The Northern financial capitalists had shown their "democratic" colors by smashing unions, maintaining a 12 to 18 hour work day and by ruthlessly exploiting the labor of women and children. There was nothing in the make-up of the class to indicate that they were willing to grant the Negroes privileges that they denied the Anglo-Americans. So the Negro and Anglo-American pawns were moved forward. No matter who won the "Battle for Democracy," for sure the Negroes were going to lose. What the revisionists Foster, Dennis, Aptheker and others describe as the "Battle for Democracy" was the political phase of the struggle between the financial capitalists of the North and the blood-sucking feudal-minded brutal landlords of the South—both capitalists—different wings of the same brutal class. At any rate, the Republicans of the North had to win over the freedmen and it was only their political opportunism that dictated the passage of the 13th and 14th amendments of the Constitution. These amendments prohibited slavery and at least formalized the civil fights of the freedmen.

The Negro People and Reconstruction

The passage of the 13th amendment to the constitution, (Dec. 18, 1865) abolished slavery and was the opening gun in the battle to reconstruct the South. The forces of the landlord-planters lashed out in a brutal effort to terrorize the ex-slaves and drive them back into slavery. This sharp and bitter class struggle presented the Negro masses with their first opportunity and necessity for organization. This resistance movement was known as the Negro People's Convention Movement. This movement only lasted from 1865 through 1866. However, it was organized in all states and was very important in blunting the counter-revolutionary efforts of the landlord-planters.

The 13th amendment unleashed social forces that the Northern capitalists feared more than they feared the planters. This was shown in the way they dealt with the freedmen when they went "too far." Thus, when property rights were at stake, the Northern finance capitalists and the Southern planters found common cause.

The freed Negroes, knowing that real freedom lay only in their ownership of the land, launched a powerful movement for re-distribution of the former slave holder lands. In the same manner as the present day Brazilian, Indian or Peruvian peasant, the freedmen simply squatted on the plantations and took possession in fact. The 'benefactors' of the Negro people in Washington did not hesitate to send troops to murder the squatters where the KKK was not up to the task of removing them. These instances exposed the real intent of the Northern capitalists. Following these 'excesses' of the revolutionary Negro people, the inevitable link-up of the Northern monopolies and the remnants of the Southern 'landlord-planters' took place. This was foretold in a letter from Engels to Marx when he wrote; 'And shall guerrillas come forth on the terrain? I certainly expect that after the definite dissolution of the armies the white trash of the South will attempt something of the sort, but I am too firmly convinced of the bourgeois nature of the planters to doubt for a moment that this will make them rabid Union men forthwith. The former are bound to attempt this with brigandage, and the planters will everywhere receive the Yankees with open arms.

This business (the burning of New Orleans, Ed.) must necessarily bring the split between the planters and merchants, on the one side, and the white trash, on the other, to a head and therewith the secession is undone.'³

This link-up between the remnants of the capitalist landlord-planters and the Northern bourgeoisie was formalized in the Hayes-Tilden agreement of 1877.

It must be stated at this point, that W.Z. Foster on p. 337 of his book *The Negro People in American History*, concedes the point that the planters were "bourgeois." However he fails to explain why it is that the CPUSA's program concerning the struggle for democracy in the South is based on the destruction of lingering FEUDAL RELATIONS, not feudal social, but feudal economic relations. The CPUSA fails to distinguish between the Negro people which was developed as a people prior to the Civil War, and the Negro national movement which developed only after the defeat of Reconstruction. The leadership of the CPUSA knows full well that to admit that slavery in the United States of North America was a crude, brutal, primitive form of capitalist exploitation would bring the CPUSA's house of revisionist cards down around their heads. Therefore, they blandly state a fact and then completely disregard it.

The passage of the 14th amendment to the Constitution which gave large numbers of ex-slaves the right to vote, threw the masses of Negro people into the political arena. Literally thousands of

Northern Anglo-Americans (the Carpetbaggers) flooded into the South. They came with various intentions, but the basic reason for the recruitment of these missionaries was to assist the Negro people in organizing themselves as a political force and taking their indispensable place in the struggle to smash the political power of the landlord-planters.

This struggle, known as the struggle for reconstruction, gave birth to the Populist movement. As was stated above, the Northern finance capitalists were faced with the delicate task of defeating the enemy politically without disturbing the existing capitalist property relations. They found the answer in the Populist movement. Here, "poor" people were thrown into struggle against "rich" people without any consideration as to class and history. Thus a political front was skillfully built that threw the energies of the ex-slaves, poor Anglo-Americans and the free Negroes against the existing power of the landlords.

From 1865–1874 the most important and powerful organization of the mass movement was the famous Union Leagues. These adjuncts of the Republican Party were often armed defense units of the ex-slaves and poor Anglo-Americans. The Negro locals of the Union Leagues were finally crushed by KKK terror in 1874.

During the period of Reconstruction a rapid proletarianization of the Negro people took place. During the 1870s the Colored National Labor Union expanded until it had locals in 23 states. The CNLU associated itself with the International Workingmen's Association led by Karl Marx.

One of the most powerful and broad organizations of the Populist movement was the Southern Farmers Alliance. The development of the Southern Farmers Alliance was largely independent of the integrated democratic National Farmers Alliance. The Southern Alliance (a base of the Populist Movement) endorsed white supremacy and excluded Negroes from its ranks. The role of the Alliance was to be the main battering ram to finish off the landlord-planters. The monopolies certainly intended that the Negroes were not to play a role in it. However, in the course of the political struggle with the planters, it became evident that the Alliance would have to broaden its social base in order to out fight and out vote the landlords. It was for this reason alone that the leadership of the Alliance defended the Negroes right to vote, and on many occasions, leading armed men to prevent the lynching of a Negro member.

This movement was widely supported by the Negro people despite its white supremacy. In the struggle of the Alliance we can see the crucial position of the Negro masses. While the Anglo-American locals tried to dominate and dictate to the Negro locals, the Anglo-Americans were compelled to fight for the right to vote and the right to organize for the Negroes. It had been obvious from the beginning that the South would have to rely on the Negroes whether in organizing a struggle for progress or to exploit the wealth of that region. The monopolies, acting through the Populist movement were able to drive the planters to the wall and defeat them only by relying on the deep democratic aspirations of the Southern Negroes.

The Defeat of Reconstruction and Populism, the Imperialist Offensive and the Rise of Fascism

By the early 1870's the basic goals of the Northern capitalists had been achieved. Woodward points out in his *Origins of the New South*. "At least half of the planters after 1870 were either Northern men or organized in corporations and financed by banks."⁴ Further, "Not one third of the cotton plantations of the Mississippi Valley were owned by the men who held them at the end of the war."⁵ It was plain that the financial capitalists of the North had finally achieved hegemony throughout the U.S.N.A.

As the positions of the finance capitalists were consolidated, the horror of the Ku Klux Klan, now under the direction of Wall Street, was unleashed against the Negro people. For example in Vicksburg, Mississippi, over 200 Negroes were killed in the week before the city election. President Grant reported to the Senate in 1875, "...A butchery of citizens was committed at Colfax, Louisiana, which in blood-thirstiness and barbarity is hardly surpassed by any acts of savage warfare."⁶

The counter-revolution took on the aspects of a slaughter of a people. In 1871, in the area around New Orleans, 297 Negroes were lynched in one month. Reporting on the situation in North Carolina, Judge Albion W. Tourgee said, "Of the slain there were enough to furnish a battlefield and all from these three classes, the Negro, the Scalawag and the Carpetbagger... the wounded in this silent warfare were more thousands than those who groaned upon the slopes of Gettysburg."⁷

It is worth noting that it was during the most bloody years of the terror and counter-revolution that the Republican Party increased its strength. In 1872, Grant was reelected. The Senate held 49 Republicans against 19 Democrats the House of Representatives held 195 Republicans against 88 Democrats.

So we see that the conditions for the defeat of Reconstruction was the consolidation of hegemony, both economic and political, of finance capital. This does not at all jibe with the CPUSA's contention that the defeat of Reconstruction was based on an agreement between the feudal landlord planters and the Northern industrialists.

The Hayes-Tilden Agreement

The presidential balloting of 1876 gave the Northern monopolies their chance to crush the last vestiges of democracy in the South, while at the same time relieving themselves of any responsibility for the slaughter, new slavery (peonage) and colonization of the Negro people. Hayes, the Republican candidate lost the popular vote by 252,224 votes to the Democrat Tilden, who represented strictly the planters without the demagoguery of Hayes. Tilden claimed the election. So, the Republicans challenged the ballots from So. Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and Oregon. This maneuver threw Tilden out of the race but still left Hayes one electoral vote short of the needed majority. A constitutional crisis followed. There were many threats and even a phoney plan for the Southern Tilden supporters to take Washington by a coup d'état.

Of course, the crisis and the threats of a new civil war were merely the smokescreen for a legal coup. This came in the form of the infamous Hayes-Tilden agreement. Basically the agreement was to turn the Southern state governments over to the Democrats, including the governments of South Carolina and Louisiana where the Republicans still held democratic populist control. The most telling part of the agreement was that the North would withdraw all Federal troops out of the South and let the South settle its own problems. By returning the state governments to the Democratic Party, now fully controlled by the imperialists, and deepening the concepts of states rights, counter-revolution could triumph and the will of the democratic masses of the North would be legally blocked.

The Hayes-Tilden agreement had the same effect in the South as when President Hindenberg of Germany "felt" compelled to appoint Adolph Hitler as Chancellor of Germany. Every fascist current in the South zeroed in on the Negro masses and the democratic minded poor Anglo-Americans.

The Fascist Offensive

The Hayes-Tilden agreement and the following withdrawal of the federal troops from the South in 1877 was only a big event in a well defined trend. To the degree that the financial capitalists

politically subdued the landlord-planters, to that degree did the monopolies hand the Negroes back into a new slavery. As the troops left, the landlords surfaced as a political power. However, this time they were not in opposition to, but were the direct and brutal agents of the bloodthirsty monopolies. It became clear that they had never lost military supremacy over the Negro people. At no time and at no place had the Negroes ever won a clear political majority. The pro-slavery storm troops allied with the terrorist KKK never allowed Reconstruction to stabilize or develop.

In the South, the offensive of imperialism had a marked fascist character. The withdrawal of the Federal troops was the signal for the “revolt of the poor whites.”

The democratic, anti-monopoly Populist movement that reached its high point just before the counter-revolution was led, in the South by such men as Ben Tillman and Tom Watson. These so-called leaders were opportunist vacillating men who constantly compromised with the landlords while trying to fight them. The most crucial and decisive question was the question of the unity of the Negro and Anglo-American masses. Despite all the speeches to the contrary, Watson, Tillman et al, never moved to do away with Negro segregation in the Farmers Alliance. The only outcome of a revolutionary mass movement led by vacillating, petty bourgeois leaders was the fascist drive.

Just as the Populist movement was led by Tillman and Co. when the monopolies needed to crush the landlords, so the “revolt of the poor whites” was also led by Tillman and Co. when there was the need to crush Populism and especially the Negro masses.

The newly enfranchised poor Anglo-Americans from the hills were manoeuvred out of the struggle between the monopolies and the landlords, were imbued with rabid white supremacy and turned against the Negro masses. There was no “revolt of the poor whites” any more than there was a Hitler inspired revolt of the poor peasant or the lumpen-proletariat. What took place at the birth of imperialism and fascism was a skillful maneuver which relied on the centuries old white supremacy to co-opt the Populist movement, garb it in the mantle of the Ku Klux Klan and push it onto the stage of history as the hangman of Democracy.

This “revolt of the poor whites” was led by such fascists as Vardaraan, Tillman and Cole Blase. They constructed a social order that was faithfully copied by Hitler, who also referred to his fascist movement as the “revolt of the poor peasants,” “the petty bourgeoisie,” etc. In the pamphlet “The Economics of Barbarism” (International Publishers, N.Y., 1940, p. 50,52) Kuczynski and Witt point out how the rules for Hitler’s Slave State were copied from the black codes.

Some of the fascist characteristics of the counter-revolution were: 1) It conformed to the description of being the “open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialistic elements of finance capital.”⁸ 2) “The ascension to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another, but a substitution of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie—bourgeois democracy, for another form—open terrorist dictatorship.”⁹ 3) “Fascism comes to power as a party of attack on the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, on the masses of the people who are in a state of unrest; yet it stages its accession to power as a revolutionary movement against the bourgeoisie on behalf of the whole nation.”¹⁰

What made up the “fascist character of the counter-revolution” was not simply its brutality or violence, but the fact that the “revolt of the poor whites” cloaked itself in the mantle of saving the “South.” The fascist led “revolt” was the absolute agent of finance capital of the North. The counterrevolution attacked and overthrew the Reconstruction bourgeois democratic governments. Then, the fascists substituted a reign of terror as the new state form of domination over the emerging Negro Nation. In the Anglo-American nation the capitalists in the main relied on deception, bribery and fraud, in short, on bourgeois democracy. This was not the case in the Black Belt! Here, the rule of finance capital was maintained by an unheard of reign of terror, legal and extralegal, both

by police and the KKK.

From time to time Communists have raised this question of fascism in the Negro Nation and in the entire South only to retract their statements because they held that there was a contradiction between their conception of fascism and imperialism. So they were told, and so they thought. Fascism is rampant imperialism. George Seldes was quite correct when he said that fascism is imperialism turned inward. To understand the rise of fascism in the South, means taking fully into account that even during the periods of radical reconstruction, segregation remained a way of life. In the Union Leagues, in the Labor Unions, in the Farmers Alliance, there were Anglo-American and Negro locals. Because the decisive element of Negro-Anglo-American unity was not fought for, it was easy for the fascists to appear on the scene as the progressive leaders of the "poor whites." Confusion around this question of the role of the Anglo-American leaders has been common. For example, in Foster's book (*The Negro People in American History*, International Publishers. N.Y., 1954) on page 381 he states, "Ben Tillman of Georgia (actually Tillman was from South Carolina, Ed.) declared for Negro, white cooperation..." and on page 384 he states, "Pitchfork Tillman, a rabid white chauvinist..." (Foster's book is marked by such contradictions.)

It would seem that the book was written by several people who didn't speak to one another or that Foster had a severely split personality. Foster accounts for the transition of Tillman and Watson from democrats to chauvinists in this manner, "In the early upswing of the Alliance movement, they scoffed at the boogey of 'white supremacy,' made fiery attacks on the big planters, and expressed solidarity with the oppressed Negro masses. Unstable petty bourgeois elements, however, they all wound up as the most vicious of Negro baiters." This is a typical example of Foster's historiography. Subjective, inaccurate and an affront to Marxism. According to this sort of analysis, Benito Mussolini, a Socialist who wrote to Lenin and marched on Rome under the banner of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, introduced fascism in Italy because he was an "unstable petty bourgeois element," who wound up as the most "vicious" of anti-communists. With the same analysis German fascism can be explained because Hitler was a petty bourgeois element. No, M. Bourgeois, this will never do, we have to look deeper, something the Communist Party dared not do. Any investigation shows that the Watsons, Tillmans etc., were elements that were groomed and paid for by the finance capitalists. When it was necessary to organize the masses to gain the political victory over the landlords, these "leaders" came forth with a particular line; then, when it was necessary to stop the democratic upsurge, prevent it from getting out hand, they took another line. Yet, Foster's line inevitably leads to the conclusion that the white chauvinist text books are correct, that the counter-revolution was a reaction to "black reconstruction." The facts show otherwise, the "revolt of the poor whites" was merely the mask for the fascist counter-revolution financed and conducted by Northern finance capital.

A political force, constructed and funded by finance capital which overthrows a legal bourgeois democratic government and substitutes as a state form the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic elements of finance capital is called fascist. Such a political state we call fascism.

It should be noted that the historic roots of the Communist Party go through the old Socialist Party into the Populist movement. The Populist concepts are still strong in the CPUSA. Their "anti-monopoly coalition" is but one of these Populist slogans, if not the most important. It must be said that the main reason for the confusion of the Communist Party on this period of Reconstruction is the fact that they themselves are Populists, not Marxist-Leninists.

Many of the Populist leaders who became the worse white chauvinists and fascists such as Ben Tillman were "progressive" leaders of the mass movement. Like their followers, Hitler and Mussolini,

these fascist leaders of the South were recruited from the peoples' movement. This was the only way that fascism could have the necessary social base.

The positive aspects of the Populist movement was proof enough that the general toiling masses cannot move forward without the Negro people. This history also shows that the special democratic demands of the Negro people cannot help but be the demand for political independence.

As the heavy hand of imperialism was clamped on the South, and especially on the Black Belt, the mass movement became a real Negro movement. Its main content was the special demand of the Negro people for anti-lynch laws and for civil rights. Prior to the defeat of Reconstruction, the demands of the Negro people for bread, land and liberty, were so intertwined with the demands of the general toiling masses that to separate the motion of the Negro people from the rest of the toiling masses in the Black Belt was impossible.

Even during the worst days of reaction, it was impossible to totally single out the Negro for the chain gang, the lynch rope, the burning stake or the peonage camp.

The terrorist military overthrow of Reconstruction opened the way for the re-enslavement of the Negro people. The peonage system, the shares farming system and the black codes forced this re-enslavement. At the same time the forced segregation laid the basis for the development of a Negro bourgeoisie. Existing insurance companies refused to do business with Negroes, so Negro insurance companies rose. Existing banks refused to service Negroes, so a Negro banking system arose. The old axiom of "Whatever can happen, will" was proven in the development of the Negro bourgeoisie. The dialectics of reaction transformed the enslavement of the Africans into the enslavement of a nation.

The Negro Bourgeois Democratic Movement

The nature of the struggle of the Negro people changed rapidly during Reconstruction, and the counter-revolution accelerated this change. What began as the struggle of a peasant mass with a minute proletariat rapidly became the struggle of an oppressed nation with all classes developing rapidly under the pressures of fascist imperialism.

Under such circumstances the developing Negro bourgeoisie split in two. That portion which sold to the people and therefore had to rely on the people came out in opposition to Wall Street imperialism. The portion that sold to the imperialists and therefore had to rely on the imperialists became the Negro people's comprador bourgeoisie. Woodson and Wesley noted this split in the Negro leadership:

Other Negroes who thoroughly understand the inevitable result from such a surrender, gave up the fight for democracy in return for the profits of segregation. The extension work of church organizations, social welfare agencies and institutions of learning controlled by white advocates of caste have all been brought under the direction of Negroes who have sealed their lips as to actual democracy. Such Negroes are approached beforehand and thoroughly tested as to their stand on race matters. If they conform to the requirements of genuflecting Toadyism they are placed in these commanding positions to use their influence in keeping the Negro content with their lot.¹¹

In a slightly more sophisticated manner, the situation is the same today. The base of the Negro comprador bourgeoisie is still the clergy, social welfare agencies, the educational bureaucracy, and the governmental bureaucracy. It was from this split in the bourgeoisie that the Negro People's Liberation Movement arose.

The struggle of the Negro masses was directed first against slavery and then against peonage. Such a movement could not and was not simply a “Negro” movement except in the sense of its being national.

During the period of the overthrow of Reconstruction, the struggle of the Negro masses could not be separated from the struggle of the rest of the colonial world. In fact, the struggle of the Negro masses against imperialism was an integral part of the struggle of the Cubans, the Puerto Ricans, the peoples of Santo Domingo, Haiti, the Philippines and everywhere that U.S.N.A. imperialism was enslaving nations and peoples. Neither could the fight for the Negro people be separated from the struggle of the workers and dirt farmers against the Robber Baron monopolies.

The Negro people protested the imperialist acquisition of Haiti, the Virgin Islands and the West Indies. Not only did they fight against the practice of color discrimination, but they clearly saw that their fight for democracy and equality was undercut by the expansion of imperialism.

Both Presidents Harding and Coolidge were compelled to appoint Negro Commissions to look into conditions in the newly conquered territories. These commissions could not accomplish anything, but they were evidence of the international concern of the growing Negro bourgeoisie.

The Church

The Negro church emerged from slavery as the only social institution allowed by first the slave masters and then the Wall St. masters of the South. The leading role of the Negro church remains stamped on the movement to this day. Consequently, in the beginning at least, spokesmen for both sections of the new Negro bourgeoisie spoke from the pulpit. The result of this was that the movement was split into various locals and therefore, individual leaders instead of masses seemed to emerge as the leading factor. This was especially true in view of the fact that the churches did not exist in limbo. They were, in fact governed by bourgeois clerics in the North and sometimes the metropolitan South. Furthermore, the leading bishops etc., were an integral part of the Anglo-American ruling class. The “Negro Church” is a misnomer. In fact, “Negro Churches” are Anglo-American capitalist controlled churches for Negroes. At one time the Colored Baptist and the AME Zion Churches made a stiff fight for their independence, but such a fight could not be won under capitalism. The only exception to the fact that Anglo-American bourgeois clerics dominate the Negro church is the innumerable store-front churches.

Some of the churches under slavery became important and wealthy institutions. After the capture of Atlanta, General Sherman called together the leading slaves and free Negroes and was surprised to find that one slave owned church was valued at \$50,000 and another at \$35,000. (*The War of the Rebellion-Congressional Inquiry*, Vol. 33)

Although the slaves had been taught the European religions in an effort to pacify and ideologically chain them, the church also served as a meeting place to plot escapes and plan such resistance as was possible under the conditions of slavery.

During the counter-revolution, there was a great demand for segregated churches and when that didn't seem to be enough, there was the demand for entirely separated church administration systems. This experiment in apartheid was set aside when it was realized that such a complete separation would mean Negro bishops and a church attuned to the problems of the Negro people. The church rulers soon saw the folly of abandoning religious thought to the Negroes as the Southern churches had done after the Civil War. (See Woodson and Wesley, p. 534) Thus, the church remained a Trojan horse to the Negro movement, populated by Negroes and controlled by a bourgeois Anglo-American clergy. It could not but play a dual role, both progressive and reactionary. The major

aspect, however, was to drain off the militant energy and to misdirect the struggle of the Negro people. The fact that the Negro church despite its anti-democratic structure, became the birth place of so many Negro movements is a testimony to both the vitality of the Negro masses democratic aspirations and the deeply rooted social position of this institution.

The Split in the Negro Movement

Booker T. Washington's famous Atlanta speech signaled the fully matured split in the Negro National Movement. Washington became the most powerful and tyrannical Negro individual in the movement. A word from Washington was enough to financially and politically destroy almost anyone who dare oppose him. He went so far as to buy up newspapers he disapproved of. In his position of directing the funds that went to social service agencies and to the schools etc., it was simple to transform that economic position into a political one. His position was an extension of the "Head Negro" under slavery.

Washington's Atlanta speech of 1895 was a high sounding declaration of compromise and acceptance of the social and economic enslavement of the Negro people. Washington's statement that, the wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, was the battle challenge to the Negro national bourgeoisie. Led by Du Bois and W.M. Trotter, they set out to organize the majority who were resisting this line of Washington's. Woodson and Wesley report, "With the exception of a small minority, the Negroes regarded this policy as a surrender to the oppressors who desired to reduce the whole race to menial service."¹²

Harry Haywood characterizes Washington as: The voice of the embryonic middle class. Foster paints him as a "Bourgeois nationalist." (See Foster, *The Negro People in American History*, International Publishers, N.Y., 1954, p. 413) Foster and other Communist Party writers and theoreticians quite correctly characterize Du Bois as a Negro bourgeois leader—pointing out that in respect to building up Negro businesses, Du Bois and his followers out did Washington in some respects. (See Foster, op. cit., p. 417) Finally, Foster makes an attempt to explain the obvious difference between these two leaders. Foster says,

The main point of divergence between the movements however—and this was decisive, was where Washington preached humility and submission for the Negro people, Du Bois and his followers advocated a course of militant struggle.¹³

Foster's description of the split in the Negro bourgeoisie insults the intelligence of even the most naive Marxist. Was it that Washington just happen to chose the path of submission and Du Bois just happened to chose the path of struggle? Not at all. Such historiography makes history revolve around the subjective whims of leading individuals. The difference between a Congolese Lumumba and Mobuto was hardly their likes and dislikes—it was their class position in relation to imperialism—and so it was with Du Bois and Washington. The maturing of a modern nation under the oppression of imperialism inevitably brings out two wings of the national bourgeoisie. On the one hand the comprador bourgeoisie and on the other, the national bourgeoisie with the social and political and economic base that has been previously described.

Foster was an intelligent man and the Communist Party gave him a staff of Ph.D.s to assist him in writing his book on Negro history. Why was it that the class and social differences were so incomprehensible to him? The secret of their ignorance is simply this: The Communist Party is tied by a thousand financial, social and political threads to the liberal Anglo-American bourgeoisie. These threads absolutely prescribed the Party's understanding of the Negro question as a National

Colonial question. Therefore, relying on the backwardness of the radicals of the U.S.N.A., the CPUSA found it possible to do away with the most glaring theoretical and social contradictions by either ignoring them or obscuring them with bourgeois drivel.

The fact is the Washington was the leader of a maturing Negro comprador bourgeoisie. Du Bois emerged as a leader of the Negro national bourgeoisie. By overlooking these contradictions, the CPUSA could claim to be the Party of the Negro people. Actually, the CP represented the Negro national bourgeoisie, if anything at all. The social background of the leading Negroes in the CP shows this. To name but a few—Ben Davis, lawyer, son of a leading Negro family in Atlanta, Georgia; Dr. James Jackson, Ph.D, son of a leading Negro family in South Carolina; Langston Hughes, a leading Negro author and poet. Such men as Henry Winston, although coming from the Negro working class, had long lost his connections with the people. The one exception was Pettis Perry, a Negro worker who never reconciled himself to the Party's revisionism, and during his lifetime was constantly harassed by the leadership. Harry Haywood, the Negro author and sociologist was almost outlawed from the CP for publishing his "Negro Liberation." Even such outstanding non-party leaders as Eslanda Goode and her husband Paul Robeson could not represent anything but the radical Negro bourgeoisie.

The fundamental difference between the position of the Communist League and the CPUSA on the Negro question is the description by the CL of the Negro question as a modern National Colonial question with all its ramifications for the proletarian revolution and the daily class struggle. The CP position on the Negro question is an abstraction that flows from the fundamental Party position that the movement in the Negro Nation is a continuation of the "Battle for Democracy" and the program must be a complete wiping out of the remains of feudalism and the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Under the conditions of fascism and the total control of monopoly the CP proposals become thoroughly exposed as reactionary.

The Party position on the Negro question is not simply an isolated case. On the contrary, the CP is quite consistent. Jay Lovestone's contribution to the CP was American exceptionalism in American political economy; Browder's contribution was American exceptionalism in the critique of American imperialism. Foster's contribution was American exceptionalism on the national question as regards the Negro Nation. His concept of a nation within a nation is not so striking because it is a unique concept in Marxism, but it is striking in that it is an extension of the basic form of CPUSA revisionism—American exceptionalism. The Negro question is not an exception. Even Foster admits that, "...the peonage known as share cropping (much akin to types of tenancy found in colonial Asia), which (was) enforced by terrorism."¹⁴ The path of peoples from slavery is into peonage. This is just as true for the Negro people as for the Mexicans or the Puerto Ricans or the Hondurans. Foster admits to this when he writes, "It had been the tragic history of emancipated slaves, during the past century and throughout the western hemisphere—whether Indians or Negroes—that they did not pass from the status of slavery to that of free farmers and workers, but rather to one form of peonage or another."¹⁵ There, apparently, the science of history ends and the development of the Negro question reverts back to the Communist Party's specific form of revisionism—American exceptionalism.

Under such intellectual giants as Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and James Monroe Trotter, editor of the "Boston Guardian," the Negro bourgeoisie broke into the political life of the U.S.N.A. This vigorous and new bourgeoisie did not confine itself to the national scene, but understanding the necessity of fighting the enemy in the international arena, took the fight against imperialism into the World War I Peace Conference (1918). They demanded that the spread of imperialism be halted and that the African colonies and Haiti be set free. They formed political organizations, such as the National

Independent Political Rights League to enforce the constitution.

It may appear that Du Bois was the worldwide champion of the dark skinned people and not necessarily fighting imperialism per se. But a closer examination will show that the only place for imperialism to expand was to the dark skinned people, and the fight for racial equality was the form that the anti-imperialist struggle had to take.

Because of the “race riots,” lynch law and tightening segregation this Negro bourgeoisie enjoyed a rapid growth. The Negro as a consumer held little attraction for the expanding monopolies so the Negro market was wide open to this Negro bourgeoisie. Negro businesses doubled between 1910 and 1920. By 1920, Negro farmers owned 13,948,512 acres of land and in addition, Negro tenants rented land valued at \$1,676,315,864. (See Woodson and Wesley, *The Negro in Our History*, Associated Publishers, N.Y., 1966, p. 538) Where Anglo-American businesses failed to service the Negro people, Negro businesses arose—in catering personal service, in drayage and storage, in forging and carriage making in butchering and in mattress making, etc.

Under the leadership of Du Bois, the Pan African movement was formed. Speaking in the name of dark skinned peoples everywhere, in the fight for justice, ending the slave trade and opposing the liquor traffic, the Negro national bourgeoisie extended its base throughout the world. The internationalism of the Negro bourgeoisie exists to this day. The ringing cries for world peace from a Martin Luther King; the eloquent cries for democracy and justice in the civil rights movement today is but an extension of the bourgeois movement of 70 years ago.

The right wing of the national bourgeoisie, the comprador wing remained firmly under the control of Booker T. Washington. Little has changed with respect to the role of the comprador. It is obvious that along with the concept of Asians fighting Asians and Africans fighting Africans, there is a definite move afoot to have Negroes control Negroes. This “Puerto Rican solution” to the Negro question is becoming more and more apparent. “There are now 665 Negroes holding elective offices in the 11 Southern states. This included blacks in the legislatures of Alabama and South Carolina. In Alabama alone, 21 blacks were elected to office in 1970—including coroners and one probate judge. Two black mayors were elected in Arkansas. In addition to local elective gains, a second black legislator was elected in Florida; a 15th in Georgia and a second in North Carolina.”¹⁶

Naturally, revisionists hail these “election victories” without at all estimating that what we are witnessing is the gradual application of neo-colonialism to the Negro colony. Who can control the raging Negro movement for national liberation better than Negro compradors? The imperialist leopard has not changed its spots. Far from being a cause to rejoice and lower the guard, the passive acceptance on the part of the ruling class of elected Negro officials is cause for alarm. While we welcome and fight for the participation of broad masses of Negroes in the political life of the Negro colony, we are not going to be fooled into welcoming a gang of Negro Chiang Kai-sheks to replace the cops in the same way the cops have replaced the Ku Klux Klan as the imperialist spearhead against the Negro people.

The hegemony of the Negro national bourgeoisie began to be consolidated in the Niagara Movement. This movement, founded by James Monroe Trotter and headed by W.E.B. Du Bois, was founded July 14, 1905. The Niagara Movement took as its goal the full equality of the Negroes. Its weapons were to be militant in politics and propaganda. This movement, gaining wide support amongst the masses, founded the militant Equal Rights Leagues. Clearly, there was a danger of the Negro bourgeoisie breaking the imperialist economic and political fetters. Moving behind the Anglo-American upper-class liberals, the imperialists moved to counter this threatened breakaway. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed May 30, 1909. It soon absorbed the Niagara Movement and the Equal Rights Leagues.

Foster states, "The basis of the New N.A.C.P. was the rising wave of resistance among the Negro people, earlier expressed by the Niagara Movement."¹⁷ This theory accords with the needs of the imperialists and is contradicted by Foster himself in the same book, where he states, "Among the white liberals signing the call were Professor John Dewey, Jane Addams, William Dean Howells, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsh, Reverend John Haynes Holmes, Dr. Henry Moskowitz, Dr. Charles E. Parkhurst, Louis Wald, Mary E. Wolley and Susan P. Wharton. There were also several white socialists among the signers, including William English Walling, Charles Edward Russel, J.G. Philips Stokes, Mary E. Dreier, Florence Kelly and Mary Ovington."¹⁸

With this gang of honey mouthed liberals fronting for the imperialists, what chance did the Negro movement have. Little wonder that a militant like J.M. Trotter refused to join the NAACP and fought to keep the Equal Rights Leagues out too.

Actually, the formation of the NAACP and its co-option of the Niagara Movement and the Equal Rights Leagues spelled the end of the independent efforts of the Negro bourgeoisie to unite against imperialism. The real basis of the NAACP was imperialism exemplified by the backing of these imperialists; Mrs. Cyrus McCormick, Harvey Firestone, the Duponts and the like. The policy of imperialist co-option of the Negro people's movements has remained a prime tactic of the imperialists.

The Negro People's Liberation Movement

During the crisis and depression years of 1920–1927, one-half to two-thirds of all Negro businesses were wiped out. (See Woodson and Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 545) This could not but have the most striking effect on the Negro people's movement. The budding energetic Negro bourgeois movement was defeated by imperialism, its economic base was all but done away with. The Negro businessman was hurled down into the ranks of the Negro proletariat.

The post 1917 period saw the Negro workers begin to assert themselves in an independent manner. Prior to this period it was not possible for the Negro workers to express themselves independent of the Negro national bourgeoisie. This was not because of the weakness of the Negro workers, but since the imperialists inherited the racist forms of oppression from slavery, this was the only social form at their disposal. The content of the oppression had changed from the oppression of individuals to the oppression of a nation. In the early 1900's as today, the imperialists struggled to maintain this racist form of oppression. Thus it appears that the central contradiction was between all "blacks" and "whites" rather than between workers and capitalists.

Given the economic history of the U.S.N.A. it is impossible for the Negro workers to march very far in advance of the general working class of the U.S.N.A. Therefore, the construction of a party of the working class became a historical necessity and inevitability. The advances the Negro workers made during the 1930's and 1940's, was in the main due to the militant leadership of the Communists, including the Negro Communists. Proof of the growing awareness of the Negro workers and the lower middle class is expressed in the fact that in 1938 the Communist Party registered 10,500 Negro Communists.

Negro Communists played a heroic role in the building of the Unions, especially the C.I.O., the role of the Negro Communists in the building of the Party in the South was indispensable. Large sections of the Negro people followed the line of the Communist Party because of the struggles led by Negro Communists as well as the fact that most radical elements of the Negro bourgeoisie were in or openly backed the CPUSA. Because the CPUSA played an important role in the Negro people's liberation movement, the betrayals of the Negro people by the CP etc., had a particularly destructive

effect. The first of these was the dissolution of the CP in 1944. The second main betrayal was the unconstitutional dissolution of the Party in the South in 1949. This betrayal was accompanied by the wrecking of the powerful Negro labor Councils. Since the most advanced Negro workers were in or close to the Party, these anti-working class actions had an especially destructive effect on the general Negro people's movement. The liberation movement floundered momentarily, the leadership either totally disoriented, scared off or bought off.

It was under such conditions that the magnificent struggle in Montgomery, Alabama Dec. 4, 1955 broke out. The militant bravery, the ingenuity and steadfastness of the Negro people in Montgomery was a catalyst to reactivate broad sections of first the Negro people and consequently broad sections of the petty bourgeois "left." The struggle in Montgomery also brought about a re-awakening of interest in revolutionary Marxism. The Montgomery Boycott awakened the new militant Black Student Movement, and that movement was the political base for the S.D.S. In a real and concrete way, the rebirth of the Negro people's national liberation movement caused the revitalization of the revolutionary movement in the U.S.N.A.

During the massive struggle of the Negro people in Birmingham in the spring of 1963, it became evident that there was a new internal contradiction developing. That development was the fight of the Negro proletariat for its independent role and the leadership of the Negro masses. Despite the ruthless police repression and the betrayal of the so-called leadership, a new stage in the struggle was evolving. This emerging stage became more pronounced during the summer of 1964. In Harlem, Bedford Stuyvesant and Rochester, the Negro national minority workers fully rejected the petty bourgeois leaders. The history of the mass struggle of the Negro people was taking a new turn. In Watts, on August 18, 1965, this new stage—this new qualitative development reached full maturity. Not simply rejecting—but shooting the misleaders, the Negro national minority workers were burling face to face against the naked power of the state.

Under these conditions of revolutionary mass struggle, the revisionism of the CPUSA became fully exposed. Acting as the left flank guard of President Lyndon Johnson, the editors of *Political Affairs* moaned advice, "What is essential of course, is the mounting of a real war against poverty."¹⁹

The revolutionary Uncle Tom, William C. Taylor summed up the cause and effect of the Watts uprising, "Can anyone doubt that Chief Parker's racist statements helped to pave the way for the infiltration of the Los Angeles police department by Birchites and ultra-Right elements to the detriment of the impartial enforcement of law and order?"²⁰

Begging for the reestablishment of the bourgeoisie's hegemony over the struggle, Taylor concluded, "Within the Negro community there has developed a higher and stronger level of unity than ever before. This development has grown out of the recognition of the Negro middle class of their responsibility in relation to the aspirations of the poor and working Negro people."²¹

Aptheker topped it all off by his cry for the Red Cross to investigate the jails that were crammed with Negro national minority fighters.

The Watts uprising objectively linked the struggle of the Anglo-American workers to the national liberation movement in the Negro Nation. The new level of struggle that matured in Watts was carried even farther by the Detroit uprising of 1967. There the participation of Southern Anglo-American workers from the Negro Nation was, for the ruling class, a terrible harbinger of the future. Detroit showed that the struggle not only linked the Anglo-American working class to the Negro national struggles, but through the Negro people's movement to the whole of the colonial world. Indeed, the Negro people whose enslavement was so necessary to the growth of capitalism were completing the encirclement of imperialism of the U.S.N.A. and shaking it to its foundations.

By the wholesale use of bribery, corruption and selective repression, the mass scale, but not the

intensity of the struggle has slacked for the moment. An additional and major reason is the lack of a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. But recent lively theoretical debate amongst revolutionaries on the Negro question and the drawing of broad masses of Negro workers into the theoretical struggle, all testify that the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party is a practical inevitability in the foreseeable future.

The Negro workers, who have now arisen in all their splendid heroism, had to cast aside non-violence as a tactic. They had to move directly into a confrontation with the state. In making this confrontation, the Negro national liberation movement laid the ground work for an international front of struggle against imperialism.

There can be no doubt that under the hegemony of the Negro workers the whole movement will leap forward. The imperialists know this better than we do. This is the reason that they will pay any price to keep the movement in the hands of the non-violent elements—that is, in the hand of the compromised petty bourgeoisie. One of the major aspects of this tactic is to revive and rearm the petty bourgeois, compromised syndicalist populist Communist Party of the United States of America and their assistants.

There can be no question that the Negro people's liberation movement has opened the gates of the Socialist revolution. The Negro workers occupying the strategic position of the unskilled basic workers will radicalize the whole of the working class. In order to attack the Negro workers, the government is going to have to attack and become entangled with the whole of the working class. The position of the Negro workers is strategic and they will not fail. History will record the stirring of the Negro proletariat as the beginning of the American Socialist revolution. In this historic truth is the fundamental significance of the task of constructing a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. The only course for revolutionaries today is to link the struggle of the Negro masses to the difficult task of establishing such a Party. The Negro movement has been a catalyst to re-activate the whole objective process of the revolution. That task can be completed only by bringing into existence a Marxist-Leninist conscious expression of the sub-conscious revolutionary process.

¹ Stalin, Joseph, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*. International Publishers, N.Y., 1934, p. 74

² Ibid p. 70

³ Marx, Karl, *Civil War in the United States*. International Publishers, N.Y., 1940, p. 245

⁴ Woodson, Comer Van, *Origins of the New South 1877–1913*. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1951, p. 196

⁵ Ibid p. 179

⁶ Foster, William, *The Negro People in American History*. International Publishers, N.Y., 1954, p.

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⁷ Ibid p. 333⁸ Dimitroff, Georgi, *United Front Against Fascism*. New Century Publishers, N.Y. 1938, p. 7⁹ Ibid p. 3¹⁰ Ibid p. 4¹¹ Woodson and Wesley, *The Negro in Our History*. Associate I Publishers, N.Y., 1966, p. 554¹² Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 441¹³ Foster, William, op. cit., p. 418¹⁴ Foster, William, op. cit., p. 365¹⁵ Foster, William, op. cit., p. 355¹⁶ *L.A. Times*, Nov. 29, 1970, Sec. F, p. 8¹⁷ Foster, William, op. cit., p. 423¹⁸ Foster, William, op. cit., p. 422¹⁹ Editor, *Political Affairs*, Oct. 1965, p. 7²⁰ Taylor, William, *Political Affairs*, Oct. 1965, p. 7²¹ Ibid p. 20

The Anglo-American National Minority in the Negro Nation

Within the general territory which makes up the Negro Nation, a majority of the population is made up of Negro men and women. In the territorial core of the Negro Nation—that is, the Black Belt, there is a continuous stretch of overwhelming Negro majority. However, as Lenin stated, “But the national composition of the population is one of the most important economic factors, not the only one and not the most important. Towns for example, play a most important economic role under capitalism... To separate the towns from the villages and area which economically gravitate toward them for the sake of the ‘national factor’ would be absurd and impossible. Marxists therefore must not take their stand entirely and exclusively on the ‘national territorial’ principle.”¹

History and economic development has absolutely linked the destinies of the surrounding area with the Black Belt. Therefore we see that a large minority of the people of the Negro Nation are Anglo-American. Because of imperialist terror and bribery, the power of white chauvinist ideology and the resulting separate lines of social development forced upon the Negro people and Anglo-American national minority members of the Negro Nation, the common historical development of all the people of the Negro Nation has been obscured. Slavery was a system that involved more than the African slave. That African slave was the base of slavery just as the Negro people are the base of the Negro Nation. The slave system involved a number of Anglo-European and Indian slaves, and of course, the non-slave elements who made their living serving slavery in some capacity—or hacking out a living along side it. The point is, that the Negro Nation arose on the basis of the slave system, and cannot help but involve those people who were in some way involved with that system. So-called color differences (racism) have been emphasized by the reactionary forces of the U.S.N.A. imperialists to prevent the development of a united revolutionary national movement for the liberation of the Negro Nation and the establishment of socialism.

The Anglo-American national minority of the nation can be roughly divided into three major sections: First, the toiling poverty racked elements that trace their history back for generations as proletarians, independent farmers, tenant farmers, etc. Second, there are the home grown petty capitalists (Anglo-American) and phoney politicians. A third and less prominent section of the

Anglo-American national minority, consists of those petty bourgeois and bribed working class elements that constitute the real social base of the white chauvinist imposter politician and other Wall St. front men.

The first or toiling and proletarian element is by far the largest and most important segment of the Anglo-American national minority. A real struggle must be waged to unite this oppressed Anglo-American national minority with the Negro vanguard of the proletariat in the struggle for Negro national liberation and socialism.

Many so-called revolutionaries and upstanding progressives in the Anglo-American nation deny the many examples of outstanding proletarian and anti-imperialist fighters that have emerged in times past, and are emerging today from the ranks of the Anglo-American national minority.

These enemies of the Negro people point solely to the role played by the Anglo-American national minority as the ever present “jailers” of the Negro people for the Anglo-American imperialists. That aspect of the Anglo-American national minorities development, the field bosses, prison guards, foreman, informers, Sheriffs, KKK members and other tools of oppression cannot be denied. In fact, it was to a degree, this role that made them part of the Negro Nation. But we must realize that the hiring of these tools of oppression and the chauvinist divisions within the Negro Nation, have been made possible not by the low level, but real bribery of the Anglo-American national minority workers in relation to the Negroes. By bribed, we mean that the Anglo-American national minority workers of the nation have in general received a few more of the bare necessities of life, and more social rights and privileges than their Negro brothers. A quick glance at any statistics reflecting living conditions, will quickly confirm this fact. This bribery has consisted in the main of a few more crumbs provided by imperialist exploitation of the Negro people. As imperialism collapses, so does the material base for the bribery of the working and toiling Anglo-American national minority of the Negro Nation.

The poverty of the Anglo-American national minority in the Negro Nation is, in spite of the bribe, a direct result of the colonial position of the Negro people and nation. Imperialism has constructed the social relations between the Anglo-American national minority and the Negro people, so that it often appears that it is the Anglo-American national minority and not social, economic and political relationships of imperialism, that is the oppressor and exploiter of the Negro people. During the period of slavery as today, the economic and social well being of the Anglo-American national minority is dependent upon the position of the Negro majority. This inter-twined history, has bound class brothers and sisters of different nationalities together and molded them through periods of antagonisms and cooperation into a single nationality with a single destiny.

This common history is far too long to recount, but in addition to the facts already mentioned, some of the realities which show the common background in the Negro Nation are: the fact that both Negro and Anglo-American were slaves (Anglo-Americans were generally indentured rather than chattel slaves) in the earliest days of the plantation system; both Negro and Anglo-American were subjected to centuries of oppression and hardship relative to the workers in the Anglo-American nation; many Anglo-American toilers were slaughtered along with their “freed” Negro brothers in the Reconstruction struggles for land and freedom; during the post-reconstruction years, the Populist movement and later the first WW, saw numerous examples of cooperation between ex-slaves and Anglo-American toilers (See Foster, *The Negro People in American History*, International Pub. N.Y., 1954, pp. 381–383). During strikes by the Brotherhood of Timberworkers in 1912 and throughout the United Mine Workers organizing drive in the Negro Nation, which involved militant strikes in 1904, 1908, 1917 and 1920, Negro and Anglo-American workers battled the imperialists together in united unions until they were finally beaten back by the open fascist terror of the KKK

and the U.S.N.A. government; in the 1920's and 1930's there was further cooperation involved in organizing sharecroppers unions and the CIO and massive Unemployed Councils which grew up throughout the South under the leadership of brave fighters. (See Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, Intern. Pub., N.Y., 1948, p. 208) More recent times have seen increased unity between Negro and Anglo-American workers in the ship and building construction industries, hospital industries and other struggles where the working class is beginning to feel more and more the raw edge of fascism.

Hard times and the threat of extermination have promoted unified action between Negro and Anglo-American workers before, and hard times are leading in the same direction today. But the struggle for national liberation and socialism requires more than spontaneous cooperation based on a common desperation or reformist battles which lead into one blind alley after another. It will require a high degree of class consciousness and internationalism on the part of both the Negro majority and the Anglo-American national minority in the Negro Nation. This consciousness can only be built around a united struggle for Negro National Independence that is closely linked with the fight for Socialism in the Negro Nation and the U.S.N.A. as a whole.

Unlike the Negro people, these members of the Anglo-American national minority who migrate from the Negro Nation are usually integrated into Anglo-American society within a generation or two. The previously described color factor in the U.S. of North America prevents the integration of the Negro national minority. Through the use of this color factor, no Negro toiler can gain equal rights or real freedom. However, under these circumstances, U.S.N.A. imperialism cannot prevent the escape of the Anglo-American national minority nor too much hinder their assimilation into Anglo-America. However, this integration is not a simple matter for these workers. They must rapidly exchange their folk ways and idiomatic expressions for those of Anglo-America. More and more they have been returning to the South after a bitter taste of no jobs and hard times slum life. There has been many a verse written like those in the song, "Detroit City" which describes the hard life and deep isolation suffered by the Anglo-American national minority from the Negro Nation in their struggle to integrate themselves into the Anglo-American nation.

¹ Lenin, V.I., "Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism," Critical Remarks on the National Question. F.L.P.H., Moscow, p. 5

14.2 Racism Research Project, Critique of the Black Nation Thesis (1975)

Despite the fact that racism is a major social question in the U.S., there has not been a Marxist critique of racism. To be sure, many writers of Marxist orientation have made studies of the empirical and operational aspects of racism, and their contributions will long be appreciated. But, a thorough-going Marxist critique of racism must begin with an analysis of the dialectic of racial categories (e.g., White, Black or Negro), and then study the real relations which have produced these categories. This kind of logical-historical analysis, modeled after Marx's *Capital*, has been altogether absent. Instead, most writers have accepted racial categories as social immutables, either given by natural biology or derived by continental descent. In particular, the peculiarly chauvinist logic of assigning the offspring of Black-White "mixtures" to the side of Black has never been questioned by Marxists. (It is estimated that about 70% of Blacks in the U.S. are part-European.) Thus, we find ourselves in the incongruous position of criticizing race relations while simultaneously embracing racial categories. This reminds us of an analogous dilemma of petty-bourgeois socialism

which criticizes the profit-making activity of capitalists yet worships the category of profit (and interest) as an eternal economic entity.¹

The failure to criticize the vulgar conception of racism led the Old Left to handle the race question in a schizophrenic fashion. On the one hand, racism was understood only within the limited scope of individual subjective attitudes of prejudice and bigotry, leaving unanswered the socio-economic reason for these attitudes ever becoming so widespread and sustained to begin with. On the other hand, Black people were depicted as “objectively” constituting a nation, a nationality, or a national minority by means of an argument which also made a shambles of the Marxist position on the national question. This created tremendous confusion in the communist movement in the U.S.—the race question and the national question have been weaved in and out of each other, subject to the eclectic whim of whoever was “interpreting” the line at the moment. After all, to define a Black Nation is to make use of the *racial* category Black and to characterize racism as the persecution of a *national* minority is to negate racial oppression altogether. Matters are not helped by asserting that the oppression of Black people is a “combination” of racial and national oppressions, for this is merely an admission of analytic failure disguised as a melange of analytic profundity.

To be fair, the Left has not been alone in transposing the race question into the national question. In the absence of a logical and historical analysis of racism, racial minorities have been explained often through metaphors like caste, class, or nation. Most writers have been alert to the metaphoric mode of thought and refrained from stretching it to unwarranted limits. The nation metaphor, however, has been an exception. Be that as it may, the Old Left’s effort differs from the usual school of this current in that it has seriously attempted to demonstrate a purportedly objective historical reality for the transposition of the race question into a national question. The famous thesis about the Black Belt being the national territory of the Black Nation (or “Negro Nation”) and Blacks elsewhere being a national minority (descended, presumably, from this Black Nation) constitutes the “communist contribution” to this muddled debate. After a forty year career, the Black Nation Thesis was dying a quiet death until it was revived by certain New Left groups.

It may seem, therefore, that a critique of the Black Nation Thesis at this time is out of date by some forty years, or that it is overly solicitous of certain sectarian rumblings. Or, perhaps such a critique might be dismissed as a minor logical exercise on some obscure episode of illogicality. Unfortunately, the issue at stake here is far too great for such a comfortable view. The question of a Black Nation has become much more than the foible of a runaway metaphor; it is actually indicative of certain ideological currents in the Left whose outcome can only be a reproduction of the racist mode of thought in its ranks.

Perhaps the main ideological harm of the Black Nation Thesis is that it reproduces the categorical premise of racism in the name of Marxism-Leninism. What kind of a nation would a Black Nation be which precludes the linguistic and cultural naturalization of Whites into it or Blacks out of it? What kind of a national minority is it that negates two, three, or more generations of linguistic, cultural, and economic life outside of the origin nation? Furthermore, what is the logic behind the automatic assignment of immigrants from, say, Africa or the West Indies as descendents of this strange nation which they have never even heard of? Clearly, the determination of individuals as to their “national” membership must continue to rely upon *racial* logic, overriding such real national characteristics as language, culture, residency, etc. The Black Nation Thesis must be seen, therefore, as another attempt to give a non-racial name to a racial entity.

The political consequences of this are no less pernicious. To put it simply, the Thesis could lead to the assumption that the degraded condition of Blacks inside the U.S. is due mainly to the

“undeveloped” or “underdeveloped” condition of the Black Nation and the transferred onus falling upon the descendents of this nation. Behind this apparently sympathetic and concerned tone of pronouncement lurks the rank mythology of racist historians. Is this not a replay of the same old racist tune which says, in effect, that the U.S. as a nation is essentially the “work” of Whites to which Blacks, as “outsiders,” “contribute” occasionally, episodically, and inessentially? “Credit to one’s race” now has its opposite, “debit to one’s nation”—presumably, if one had put more into the developing of one’s own nation rather than into contributing to another nation, one would be less degraded. Some such argument is marshalled to drive home the point that the struggle against racism is a special task reserved to its victims while “progressive-minded” non-victims can only “support.” In this way, the Black-White dialectic of racism is reduced to the need for Blacks to “catch-up” with Whites, and the struggle against racism is conceived as a latter-day Roman spectacle in which Blacks would be the gladiators and Whites would be the spectators.

It is a measure of the infiltrated racism in the Left that it translates the special *stake* Blacks have in dismantling racism into a special task reserved for Blacks. One of the ideological axioms of private property is that the “misfortune” of the dispossessed is their problem and not the problem of private property laws. That this mentality has had the standing of a general line in the Left indicates the need for a serious self-criticism. If we fail in this, the Black Nation Thesis will also become a theoretical justification for the present unsavory state of the racially divided organizational workings of the Left—it will become a means of making “multi-national” virtue out of racial vice.

In this paper, therefore, we shall be interested as much in the habit of thought which has produced the Black Nation Thesis as in the specific logical errors of the Thesis. The Black Nation Thesis cannot be put to rest in its deserved crypt without all of us on the Left becoming alert to illogical thoughts, reproduced illusions, and ideological restorations. With this in mind, let us proceed *in medias res*.

¹ In fact, much of Marx’s criticism of Proudhon had to do with such incongruences. See, for example, Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

1. Some Conceptual Clarifications

To begin with, we must take note of the fact that there are really two distinct presentations of Black nationhood. On the one hand, one could argue that there is a possibility of a Black Nation being formed sometime in the future and devise concrete programs to that end. On the other hand, one could argue that a Black Nation was already formed sometime in the past, that the Black Nation is an actuality. In the latter case, the purpose of theory would be to clarify this allegedly objective reality in terms of the political, economic, cultural, territorial, and other fronts of the national liberation struggle. The old communist movement espoused this view until the 1950’s,² and today certain New Left groups have revived and refurbished it. This distinction of potentiality and actuality is quite crucial since most theorizers of the Thesis start out to prove the actuality, but end up arguing for the potentiality. This has added more confusion than clarity to the debate.

This is not the place, however, to dwell on the question of the Black Nation as a potentiality, even though we would also dispute the wisdom of this view. In any case, this aspect is better handled in the context of a political evaluation of the established programs of “nation-building.” Instead, the Black Nation as an actuality will be the main object of this critique. This view has long been identified as *the* Marxist position on Black Liberation—both because its authors have invoked the name of Marxism in advancing it and because no one outside of “Marxist circles” has ever seriously

espoused it. But, strict attention to dialectical rigor and historical reality will show that such a view has no place in the Marxist method of historical analysis. If for no other reason than to dissociate Marxism from various incorrect views invoking its name, we wish to show that Black people in the United States have never constituted a nation or a national minority. We do not, of course, deny the existence of certain socio-historical characteristics which are particular to the Black people. However, we will show that these characteristics are not those of a *national* formation.

To say that a nation is an actuality is to say that it exists objectively, as a fact of *social practice*. Its existence would in no way depend on this or that theorizer, or this or that sect. Consider, for example, the territorial aspect of the national question. If the national territory of the Black Nation is, or ever was, an actual reality, then such territory would have been *disputed* in social practice rather than merely *debated* in scholastic exercises. This is not a mere verbal quibble; for real nations, the defense of the motherland is one of the most powerful slogans for the political movement. The recognition of necessity is here directly translatable into a freedom movement.

By contrast, the defense of the Black Belt (or five southern states) has never been taken seriously by the masses, but not because this defense would be a hard task. Rather the contrary: one would be hard put to find a basis for convincing the masses that the very survival of the Black people as a people depends, say, on an armed defense of such a geographical area. Here, the Black Nation Thesis, by disguising its proposal as a recognition, inverts a recognition of necessity into a necessity of recognition.

This failure to reflect reality with accuracy is already in itself a sufficient ground for repudiating the Black Nation Thesis. But the Thesis, being indicative of certain illogical thoughts concerning the concept of nation, requires us to look into the logical process which led to such an anomalous conclusion. The formulation of nationhood most crucial in this connection is that of Joseph Stalin with his famous thesis about four characteristics of a nation.³ Thus, the question is whether Stalin was wrong in his conceptualization of nationhood, whether logical errors are being made in the application of Stalin's thesis, or whether some of the concepts used by Stalin have been distorted in establishing the Black Nation Thesis. We believe that, overall, Stalin's thesis is logically consistent and conceptually sound, and that the error of the Black Nation Thesis is in misreading and misapplying Stalin's formulation.

The most prevalent error made in the application of Stalin's thesis is a logical one, namely the inversion of necessary conditions of nationhood into *sufficient* conditions for nationhood. What Stalin says is that if a socio-historically developed community lacks any single one of the four characteristic features, then it cannot possibly be a nation. (Stalin used the well-known expression "only when" to indicate this.⁴) This is not the same as saying that if a socio-historically developed community exhibits all four characteristic features, then it is *by that fact* automatically a nation; those characteristic features which a nation *necessarily* exhibits are not always what is *sufficient* to make a nation. As every student of logic knows, what is useful in disproving a point is not always useful in proving a point.

To give an example, we know that a school must have buildings, teachers, books, and students—these would constitute characteristic features of a school. If an entity lacks any one of these, then it cannot possibly be called a school in the normal sense of the word. But this is not the same as saying that whenever an entity has buildings, teachers, books, and students, it is automatically a school—public libraries, for instance, could also meet these requirements. Ultimately, only the social practice of "schooling" is the sufficient condition for a school. Buildings, teachers, books, and students are merely elements of this social practice. A school is what it is because of what it does.

For historical materialism, what is sufficient to define a socio-historical entity can only be histor-

ical practice itself; “characteristics,” “features,” and “criteria” are merely a highlighted theoretical recognition of practice. To assume otherwise is to fall into idealism, for it would invert the means of recognition into the object of recognition itself and render theoretical contemplation sufficient unto itself. Moreover, to take dismembered abstractions like “criteria” as a complete checklist toward a proof is to be metaphysical, since this would constitute the most narrow minded kind of close-ended logic. Whatever shortcomings Stalin might have had, ignorance of historical materialism—let alone logical inversion—was not one of them.

Stalin’s thesis was quite suitable to serve its intended purpose: disproving a nationhood, e.g. the “Jewish nation” of Eastern Europe. Here, we shall also make use of Stalin’s thesis to disprove the actuality of a Black Nation. For this purpose we need only demonstrate the absence of one characteristic feature. But, we wish to go beyond this logical minimum and dwell on two of the characteristic features: “common territory” and “common economic life.” In doing this, we will also be able to gain a better insight into the political economy of racism. We will not, however, address the questions of “common language” and “common culture” since that would lead us into an extended discussion of the individuation of language and culture (as social phenomena and as individual behaviors). Suffice to mention that linguistic or cultural heterogeneity has never been a problem for Black liberation; the real question has always been the *character* of social determination for phenomena like “Black Culture.”

Another important conceptual clarification for the correct application of Stalin’s thesis has to do with the notion “common.” Dialectical logic differentiates at least two kinds of common (or commonality, or community). One kind refers to the fact of being a part of a supra-individual entity; the other refers to the fact of being similarly situated but not necessarily directly or intrinsically interconnected. To say we have common ancestry is in the first sense, and to say we have a common blood-type is in the second sense. Thus, for instance, in the *Grundrisse* Marx discussed the differing developmental dynamics of the “being-together” (*Verein*) of Roman cities and the “coming-together” (*Vereinigung*) of German tribal communities.⁵ Today, the first is often called *gemeinschaft* common and the second *gesellschaft* common.

In the first instance, the individual attributes descend from the communal attributes, but in the second instance, the associational attributes rise from the individual attributes. To put it more generally, in the first kind of common, the singular arises as the concrete of the general, and in the second kind of common, the general arises as the abstract of the singular. This distinction in dialectical logic is an attempt to reflect accurately the differing dynamic of social development. Germanic tribes, for instance, were dissolved in the national formations of England, Germany, Sweden, etc. while city-states often grew into nation-states or were incorporated by them as municipalities, provided, of course, they survived the Dark Age of European feudalism.

This clarification has crucial importance for the question at hand, since Stalin’s use of “common” was in the *gemeinschaft* sense, while the Black Nation Thesis subverts it into the *gesellschaft* sense. An example will make this clear. A person may reside in Mexico, speak the Mexican national language (Spanish), partake in the Mexican economy, and be versed in Mexican culture, but may still be a foreigner to the Mexican nation. On the other hand, if a person is a member of the Mexican nation to begin with, then he is by that fact expected to reside in Mexico, speak the Mexican national language (Spanish), partake in the Mexican economy, and be versed in Mexican culture; otherwise, we say that he is in the process of denaturalization (at least in the sense of language and culture, if not in citizenship). National or nationality attributes of individuals (e.g., residency, language, culture, economic activity) are the consequence of their membership in a nation, and not vice versa.

All versions of the Black Nation Thesis rest on the faulty reasoning of first determining individuals by racial (i.e., non-national) considerations, then grouping them *by this logic* into a “nation.” Such reasoning is entirely capable of inventing such “nations” as “youth nation,” “women nation,” “slave nation,” “proletarian nation,” etc. More seriously, it can also characterize a *part* of a nation as a nation itself, and thereby serve as a sophistic means to divide a nation. For example, according to this reasoning, South Korea would be a nation in its own right since its inhabitants live in the same contiguous area, speak the same language, eke out their living in the same economy, and partake in the same culture. It has taken considerable ideological struggle on the part of nations in Asia to expose the reactionary and nation-splitting character of such sophistry, usually promoted by kept spokesmen of imperialism.

² The Communist Party of the U.S.A. partially abandoned this view in 1959, not as an incorrect view, but as a correct view of a past reality which is now supposed to be non-existent. Thus, this turnaround amounts to the dual assertion that a Black Nation was once a reality, but is now supposed to have been dissolved or dispersed. However, since the 1950’s, as far as we know, none of the other communist or workers’ parties around the world have referred to Black people as a nation or a national minority, or to Black Liberation as a national liberation struggle. The current *nom de rigueur* is “Afro-American people.”

³ “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” *Selections from V. I. Lenin and J. V. Stalin on National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, p.68.

⁴ “It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation.” *Ibid.*, p.68. Note the phrase “only when”—instead of “when”—a well-known verbalization of necessity.

⁵ “With its coming-together in the city, the commune possesses an economic existence as such; the city’s mere *presence*, as such, distinguishes it from a mere multiplicity of independent houses. The whole, here, consists not merely of its parts. It is a kind of independent organism. Among the Germanic tribes, where the individual family chiefs settled in the forests, long distances apart, the commune exists, already from *outward* observation, only in the periodic gathering together (*Vereinigung*) of the commune members, although their unity-*in-itself* is posited in their ancestry, language, common past and history, etc. The *commune* thus appears as a *coming-together* (*Vereinigung*), not as a *being-together* (*Verein*); as a unification made up of independent subjects, landed proprietors. and not as a unity. The commune therefore does not in fact exist as a *state* or *political body* as in classical antiquity, because it does not exist as a city. For the commune to come into real existence, the free landed proprietors have to hold a *meeting*, whereas e.g., in Rome it exists even apart from these assemblies in the existence of the *city itself* and of the officials presiding over it etc.” Martin Nicolaus, trans, *Grundrisse*, p.483.

2. “Common Territory”

The common territory of a nation is, therefore, something quite different from the aggregate of real-estate owned by its nationals or the residential areas of its nationals. In colonial situations, a considerable portion of a subjugated nation’s territory may come into the ownership of alien colonizers without necessarily thereby negating the national character of the land. Conversely, many nationals may emigrate into another nation without converting their new residential areas to the nationality of the origin nation. The determination of a national territory is obviously quite

different from private property rights in land or individual settlement patterns.

Matters are somewhat more complicated in the case of the “new” nations of the Western Hemisphere and parts of Africa. Here, national formations often took place as the *outcome* of capitalist colonization, rather than as the *prelude* to capitalist development as in the case of the “old” nations of Europe and Asia. Hence, the original settlement or the *gesellschaft* association of settlers is often mistaken to be the national formation itself. This in turn gives rise to the illusion that settlement as such, ownership as such, or residency as such, leads to a national territory. But, as history would have it, some settlements manage to evolve into national territories, while a great many others do not.

The question, therefore, is not land as such, but certain socio-economic relations on the land. An occupation of land seldom settles the question of its nationality, but certain developed relations on the land may convert it into a national territory. The importance of a territory to a nation is that it constitutes only one of the objective conditions for the sustenance of a nation as a nation, for the continuation of “national life”; that is, land is no more than an *objective* condition for the production and reproduction of certain particular forms of political economic relations among its nationals. This is why the necessity of defending the territorial integrity of a nation is only an *aspect* of a much larger struggle to assure the integrity of “national life.” A national territory is an *element* in the social practice of “national life” and not merely the real-estate or settlement colony of a nation’s nationals.

Thus, the Marxist way of examining an area like the Black Belt, for the purpose of deciding whether or not it constitutes the common territory of a Black Nation, would begin with the analysis of those “internal” socio-economic determinants which characterize Black people as a people and not merely the “external” relations developed between Blacks and Whites. From there, one would proceed to the examination of the territorial *aspect* of this “internal” social practice. Thus, if the Black Nation was indeed an actual reality and the Black Belt was indeed the very condition for the survival of the Black people as a nation, then the Black Nation Thesis would have dwelt primarily on the character of socio-economic relations *among* Black people, and secondarily on their relation to Whites. But, as it turned out, the manner of discourse exposed its own illogicality.

What was the manner of this discourse?⁶ First of all, the Thesis determines individuals by means of *racial*, hence non-national, categories; from there, it proceeds to study the settlement *pattern* of racially determined individuals; and, finally, it collects such areas of *racial* concentration into a whole and calls it a “national territory” contrary to its non-national determination. Thus, the social determination of racism is disguised as that of nationalism without changing its developmental essence in the least.

Some theorists of the Black Nation Thesis have pushed this confusion to its most absurd limits. For instance, all those urban residential areas of Black concentration (i.e., “ghettoes”) are gathered into a patchwork “national territory” by a logic so primitive that it reminds us of the juvenile gang notion of “turf.” This conception forgets that residential areas are consumption territories which are, by and large, separated from production territories. A “nation” of bedrooms so systematically separated from workshops can only be a ghettoizing notion.

If the national territory of a Black Nation had any kind of social validity, then one must explain residential concentration (or dispersion) from this reality instead of conjuring a national territory from residential concentration. The fact that the Thesis had to make use of such inversion demonstrates that “Black Nation” is no more than a misleading name for a social entity whose determination has little or nothing to do with the purported national formation. Thus, the error in reasoning here amounts to the inversion of the *object* of proof into the *means* of proof. Eventually,

such faulty reasoning produces more than incongruous conclusions; its illogicality strikes back with vengeance in the course of projecting future actions. An incorrect theory is bound to produce absurd “practice.”

It was all but inevitable, therefore, that the Black Nation Thesis would immediately encounter the predicament of its own illogic. Even at the height of Black concentration in the Black Belt (1880), over 45% of Blacks in the U.S. lived outside of the Black Belt. Moreover, about 40% of the Black Belt residents were White.⁷ This presented the knotty problem of (1) having to inform those Blacks outside of the Black Belt that they should derive their “national inspiration” from some small piece of land regardless of whether or not they had any ancestral connection with it, and (2) having to inform the sizable White minority in the Black Belt that they should consider themselves “aliens” from a certain date arbitrarily chosen by some obscure writers. The Old Left, under the influence of racism, came up with a few tortuous and contorted arguments to deal with the first problem, but remained more or less silent on the second. In racist America, it is much easier to tell Blacks where they belong than to tell Whites to move out or stay at the pain of being aliens.

At this point, an argument often arises that the Black Nation is such an unusual entity with such a unique circumstance of birth that it is a “nation without territory in the usual sense,” a “dispersed nation,” etc. Such an argument makes a mockery of what Marx called “categorical determinateness” and becomes quite alien to the dialectical materialist view of concepts and categories. One of the fundamental conclusions of Marxism about concepts and categories is that they are products of socio-historical practice, that they are entities with great social validity, and that, eventually, they are weapons for the revolutionary transformation of nature and society. Thus, concepts and categories are much more than pragmatist “conveniences” for communication, consensus, or contemplation. The task of theory is not simply to devise definitions, to confer names, or to combine ideas; by and large, this is already presented to the theoretician as the ideal side of mankind’s socio-historical practice. The more important task is to analyze the dialectic of concepts, to discern the real relations they reflect, and to develop sharper and broader means of cognition so as to transform the world with a greater mastery.

Thus, when we are asking whether or not Black people in the U.S. constitute a nation, it is not merely to settle some esoteric academic point or to wrap unanalyzed reality in a “convincing” package, but to see if the practical reality of national life is applicable for the Black people, and if the accumulated experience of political and economic struggle for national existence is valid for Black Liberation. In this, the misjudgement of a social entity can be as counter-productive as the misdiagnosis of a disease. Ultimately, the loss of categorical determinateness results in sectarian opinions since the possibility of social generalization is thereby precluded; it is an invitation to ten thousand different “interpretations” based on individual whims.

The requirement of categorical determinateness does not imply that concepts like “nation” are metaphysically eternal; nations are subject to historical changes and types of nation differ from one historical juncture to another. What is being pointed out here is merely this: that in order to prove that the Black Nation actually exists, its “creators” would arbitrarily modify the concept of nation, then assert that the Black people fit into this arbitrarily modified entity. This is the surest way of making theory pointless and rendering practice impotent. Real nations do undergo changes, but quite independently of the headstrong sophistry of certain individuals.

Metaphors like “a nation within a nation,” “an internal colony,” and “the Third World inside the belly of the imperialist monster” have been quite useful in advancing people’s awareness of the era of imperialism. But they are hardly analytic entities with categorical validity. In fact, they can even be harmful if they begin to obscure the *real* historical process of national formation, capitalist

colonialism, and imperialist subjugation.

A nation being formed within a nation is a process rather alien to Marxism; in fact, such a process, if it actually exists, would force us to re-examine all of the basic Marxian observations concerning the tremendous integrative momentum of nations in the bourgeois era (territory, language, economy, culture, etc.). After all, not just any part of a body is a “body within a body” (i.e., a fetus). Until such a process as a nation being formed within a nation is theoretically spelled out, it must remain no more than an intellectual fancy.

⁶ For the determination of the “common territory of the Negro Nation” see James S. Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, pp. 13–31, or Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, pp. 11–16.

⁷ Allen, *Negro Question*, p. 212, 216.

3. “Common Economic Life”

The dire economic condition meted out to Black people constitutes one of the key operational features of racism in the United States. In fact, most racism-conditioned social manifestations, like “ghetto life,” are ultimately traceable to the observable difference in individual economic expectations along the racial line. The notion of the “Black Economy” was coined to express this general condition of impoverishment and oppression. Thus, analytically, the *generalized* situation of racially determined *individual* conditions is the content of “Black Economy.”

But a curious thing began to happen. In line with the “free enterprise” view that an economy is merely a given environment for the economic activities of individuals, “Black Economy” was taken by some as an economic unity-in-itself, a system of economic interactions among Blacks as opposed to between Blacks and the rest of the U.S. This conception went hand-in-hand with the semantic inversion of “Black capitalists” and “Black bourgeoisie”: U.S. capitalists who are Black became “capitalists of the Black Economy” and U.S. bourgeois who are Black became the “bourgeoisie of Black Society.” Thus, it was one short step to the notion of “Black Society,” and the class struggle in U.S. capitalism was conceived as a dual struggle—one within “Black capitalism” and the other within whatever is left of U.S. capitalism. As a result, an economic *gesellschaft* became misinterpreted as an economic *gemeinschaft*.

For Marxists, the “common economic life” of a nation could not possibly mean the aggregate of the individual economic conditions of its nationals; as an economic life of a nation, it can only mean a common *system* of economic relations *among* its nationals.⁸ If the “Black Economy,” or some variant of it, is to qualify as the common economic life of a Black Nation, then this economy must be an incipient mode of production in its own right. Specifically, this means that the dialectic of certain basic economic relations would be internal to the Black Nation, generating such polarizations as slaves vs. masters, landlords vs. peasants, capitalists vs. proletarians, etc. *within* the Black Nation, even though this dialectic may be severely constrained by an externally imposed national oppression. In particular, if “Black Capitalism” were to signify the mode of production of a Black Nation and not merely the aggregate of entrepreneurial efforts of individual Blacks in U.S. capitalism, then it would exhibit such “macro-economic” phenomena as an emerging monetary and credit system, a suppressed but distinctive average rate of interest, a germinal but separate equity market, etc. These are phenomena which even colonized nations (i.e., real nations which are colonized) stubbornly exhibit despite colonial edicts designed to snuff them out.

This insistence on the dialectical *unity* of economic relations is the very essence of Marxist economic theory and constitutes the point of its ultimate rationality. To speak of Black slaves,

one must also speak of White masters; to speak of Black peasants, one must also speak of White landowners; to speak of Black proletarians, one must also speak of White capitalists. But, if only one pole of each of these basic relations is gathered into an “economy,” all semblance of integralness is lost and all sorts of ludicrous conclusions are produced. Metaphor and reality become hopelessly merged: a slave nation becomes a “nation” of slaves instead of a nation with slavery, a peasant nation becomes a “nation” of peasants instead of a nation with landed property, a proletarian nation becomes a “nation” of proletarians instead of a nation with the capitalist or socialist mode of production.⁹

That “Black Economy” has always meant the gathering of those in one pole of an economic-relational dialectic is beyond dispute. Black slaves were almost never the slaves of Black slaveowners and Black peasants were very rarely peasants of Black landowners; a similar statement holds true for Black proletarians—today less than 3% of Black workers are employed by Black-owned or Black-presided enterprises. Only in the case of self-employed tradesmen or independent farmers has this dialectic been convincingly obscured since buying-selling is here the main economic relation. Be that as it may, it should be noted that the much vaunted “Black Economic Development” is merely a program to “insure” a better business climate for Black-owned enterprises and to raise the level of “employability” and the wage of Black workers in the context of U.S. capitalism. Nothing like the formation of an economic structure (with its own monetary and credit system, for instance) is intended by the term. A *piece* of the action so to speak, and not the *system* of action itself. Whether or not one should support such a program is not the issue here; its content should not be mistaken theoretically and obfuscated ideologically.

A significant fact about the economic activity of individual Blacks in the U.S. is that so little of it occurs with other Blacks and so much of it occurs with the U.S. populace at large. In 1971, the aggregate income of Black households amounted to about \$51 billion, but nearly all of it was in the form of wages and transfer payments (e.g., welfare) from “White institutions.” In the same year, most of this income was spent on goods and services of enterprises that were neither Black-owned nor Black-presided. Moreover, that portion of income spent on “Black enterprises” was mostly in transferred value rather than in added value, hence ultimately paid to the “White suppliers” of “Black enterprises.” It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assume that the degree of economic integration in the above sense is probably more than 95%—even higher than the percentage of non-Blacks, 88%.

To see this in another way, let us consider the “Black Economy” in the integral framework of production, distribution, circulation, and consumption. In production, over 97% of Black workers produce outside of Black-owned or Black-presided enterprises; indeed, the distinguishing character of Black labor in the U.S. has always been objective integration in production (with job discrimination and wage differential), side by side with subjective segregation in appropriation. In distribution, there have never been separate categories of wage, profit, interest, rent, etc. for the Black Economy, only highly unfavorable and quantitatively erratic discrepancies within them. In circulation, a separate monetary system, credit network, or commodity market *for* Black people has never been a reality; instead, the overwhelming “fate” of Black people has been a shortage of U.S. money, discrimination in the U.S. credit market, and having to pay higher prices for U.S. commodities. Finally, in consumption, virtually all goods are obtained from outside of the Black community; more than that, a salient aspect of racism determined consumption has to do with the humiliation of being the object of Whites’ consumption as house-slaves or domestic servants.

By contrast, those few enterprises which cater to the Black community as their main line of business are limited to the area of production spilling over into consumption, e.g., restaurants, night-

clubs, garment shops, record companies, car agencies, insurance firms, and cosmetic manufacturers. In turn, these are often tied to the credit-market of U.S. capitalism (i.e., “White bankers”) for their meager capitalization. Plainly, there is nothing that would make the Federal Reserve System begin to worry about the development of a Black monetary structure, Black credit system, Black inflationary rate, Black equity market, Black prime interest rate, etc.

Clearly, it is ludicrous to identify this “Black capitalism” as the national economy of the Black Nation. Therefore, most theorizers of the Thesis have chosen an indirect route and have pointed to “Black capitalists” and “Black bourgeois” as “evidence” that a national economy is being shaped *within* the Black economy. For this purpose, they have translated U.S. capitalists who are Black into “capitalists of the Black economy” and U.S. bourgeois who are Black into the “bourgeoisie of Black society.” The upshot of all this is to describe the class struggle of U.S. society as a two-ring circus, one within the “White society” and the other within the “Black society”; and, finally, the two are “combined” as the oppressive interference of a “dazzling” performance over an “inept” performance.

Thus, the point of contention is no longer the character of Black capitalism, but the character of its personifications. It should be pointed out that the theoretical approach being used here by the Black Nation Thesis is the exact opposite of the Marxist approach. Instead of determining various classes by the mode of production (as Marx does), the Thesis first groups certain economic personalities into “classes” then combines these “classes” into a mode of production. To put it differently, as far as Marx is concerned, the mode of production as the drama requires classes as its characters; but in the Black Nation Thesis the actors are in search of characters. This confusion is further embellished by an inappropriate borrowing of concepts like comprador capitalist and comprador bourgeoisie in an apparent attempt to give roles to actors. To clear this fog of obscurantism, we must briefly examine the social essence of “Black capitalists” and “Black bourgeois” and determine the social arena of their being.

As for “Black capitalists,” a cursory examination of Black-owned or Black-presided enterprises shows their true socio-economic character. As of 1973,¹⁰ there were 163,000 such enterprises, of which only about 3800 employed one or more hired hands—the rest were so-called “mom and pop” stores. Some 347 enterprises had annual gross receipts of \$1 million or more, but only twenty or so came anywhere near the social standing of capitalist enterprises (measured, say, by the capitalization requirement of incorporation). Among this select few, commercial outlets and thrift institutions pre-dominated, and only three firms were in “manufacturing.” Unless one vulgarizes the concept of industrial capital into “manufacturer’s asset,” there is thus virtually no Black owned or Black-organized industrial capital properly speaking, hence no (commercial) bank capital. (Johnson Products of “Afrosheen” fame, however, might become the first exception.)

This anemic situation regarding enterprises is also reflected in the paucity of capitalist households. If we take a net worth of \$2 million or more as the minimal condition for the reproduction of a capitalist household as a capitalist household, then only a few hundred Black households meet the requirement. Needless to say, nearly all their assets are in such *capitalized* properties as real estate and securities, and seldom in *real* capital. A reality like this demonstrates not the “undeveloped” or “underdeveloped” capital formation of a Black Economy, but rather the systematic socio-economic dispossession of racism; not the unequal competition of “White capitalism” and “Black capitalism,” but a racially assigned disinheritance pole within the dispossession dialectic.

For the same reason, the conception of the “Black bourgeoisie” as the harbinger of the capital-relation of and among Black people misplaces and sanitizes the dialectic of racism. Historically, what little capital formation that has taken place among Black people has been limited to the pooling

of meager savings within the general development of U.S. capitalism. Nothing like a primitive accumulation of capital with its own essential polarization *among* Black people was ever witnessed. Such ventures as life insurance and mutual savings banking, for instance, occurred as isolated episodes within the much larger drama of Jim Crow, whose economic content was the wholesale dispossession of independent Black tradesmen and independent Black farmers.

The “Black bourgeoisie” as a social strata, therefore, did not arise as a phoenix from the ashes; its essential social *raison d’être* is determined by the logic of dispossession rather than by a defiance of it. Some have emerged as a variant of the aristocracy of labor, as “kept spokesmen” of the Black laboring masses; some have become coordinators of certain consumption activities such as “cultural needs,” “religious needs,” “welfare needs,” etc.; some have attained the status of petty-bourgeois in U.S. society at large, “professionals” for example; some have carved out a corner in the commercial distribution of the U.S. economy; some have become owners of residential real estate; and some have evolved into unproductive labores in government, social agencies, real estate brokerage, entertainment establishments, insurance agencies, and so on. In any case, they are hardly the national bourgeoisie of an incipient nation.

The real content of this social strata is also manifested in its political outlook, often aligning itself with labor movements and quasi-socialist thought. Thus, “Black bourgeois” are more likely to be what Engels called “bourgeoisified proletarians” rather than proletarianized bourgeois.

In any case, “Black capitalists” and “Black bourgeois” are definitely not comprador capitalists. Comprador capitalists are those engaged in the procurement or realization stage of (imperialist) industrial capital and branch operations of (imperialist) bank capital. Thus, their command of social wherewithal can be considerable—a modicum of state power with its standing army and police, financial networks with extensive landed property, cultural and educational organs, etc. Comprador capitalists are *real* capitalists in the same sense that commercial capitalists are. By contrast, Booker T. Washington, the “Black bourgeois” par excellence, came to command some schools, but hardly an educational system. Actually, his “power” was derived from his role as a conduit of capitalist philanthropy.

The search for a mode of production or an economic system internal to Black people has some unsavory racist implications. In line with the class-conditioned view which sees slaves as “ignoble” masters, peasants as “retarded” landowners, and workers as “unsuccessful” capitalists, racism has also depicted Blacks as “imperfect” versions of Whites. Such a purpose is usually disguised in the tone of “liberal concern”: the “lamentable failure” of the community of slaves to produce its own aristocratic leaders, the “grievous failure” of the Black peasantry to evolve into landowners, and now the “regrettable failure” of Black capitalism to develop fully. Beneath such apparently sympathetic tones lies the assumption that the “disparate” condition of Whites and Blacks in racism is due to an “unequal competition” between two interacting but distinct entities rather than due to the dialectic of dispossession. In this way, the dire consequence of systematic dispossession becomes sanitized as the sorry situation of frustrated accumulation. Even though such a view may constitute a partial criticism of racism, the part it fails to criticize harbors a gangster logic.

If individuals are ultimately products of social determinations, then proscribing the arena of social development into a ghettoized “society” in some small corner of the U.S. cannot be but an attempt to reproduce the racist verdict that Blacks are “retarded” versions of Whites. A systematically instituted “disparity” thus becomes a developmental “gap” between an advanced people and a backward people. How a “drop of African blood” can somehow put a “gap” of several generations into the social developmental time-scale is, of course, not explained.

⁸ This is not to negate international economic relations. But, analytically, economic relations within a nation constitute the sine qua non of national life whereas a nation may very well choose to minimize or eliminate economic relations with other nations without risking national dissolution. How such inner economic relations are created in the first place is not the question here. Nonetheless, let us be mindful of those colonial policies which are intended to facilitate a more systematic overseas exploitation but at the same time create incipient national economies within the colonies.

⁹ Marxists use “bourgeois nation” and “socialist nation” to describe a nation with the capitalist mode of production and a nation with the socialist mode of production, respectively. A bourgeois nation is obviously not a “nation” of bourgeois, but also includes proletarians. But a nation with the socialist mode of production is not called a “proletarian nation” since this would exclude peasants, petty tradesmen, and the like; hence it would constitute a left-deviational term.

¹⁰ *Black Enterprise Magazine*, June 1973.

4. Black Nationalism

The impetus for the Old Left’s original formulation of the Black Nation Thesis came mainly from the need to address itself to the mass magnetism of the Garvey movement. In the process, however, the requisite analysis of Garvey’s and similar movements was sacrificed and, in the end, the subjectivist view that a nation is essentially “national spirit” was unwittingly embraced. Thus, the Old Left’s theoretical work amounted to little more than conjuring up a territory, economy, culture, and language to go along with this Black “national spirit” or “national identity.”

Many a political movement of the past hundred years, however, has called itself a national movement. But, as Marx said, we should not judge a man by what he says about himself. A movement like Garvey’s, therefore, should not be taken at face value by its self-description. Instead, we must analyze the real character of the movement, and then explain the reason for its peculiar self-description. In fact, a correct analysis would focus on the dialectic of the objective and the subjective in the Garvey movement.

A self-described national movement which lacks a real basis of nationhood must eventually conjure up such a basis, if it is to survive and sustain itself. The Eastern European Jewish “national movement” around the turn of the century is an excellent example of this dynamic. (The criticism of this movement was the point of departure for Stalin’s thesis.)

Precisely because a real basis of nationhood was absent, a colonization scheme was devised to “create” this basis; and, the result is known today as Zionism.¹¹ For the same reason, Garveyism, too, eventually veered to a colonization program of “Back to Africa.” A pseudo-nation is in search of territory as a Hegelian spirit is in search of civil society.

Thus, the Garvey movement, especially its search for territory, is a proof of the *absence* of the actuality of a Black Nation, and not, as is usually assumed, a proof of its presence. To be sure, the mass character of this movement is indicative of certain deeply felt aspirations of the Black people; but the *content* of these aspirations should not be confused with its nationalistic *form*.

To be fair, we must not lump what is today called Black Nationalism together with the Black Nation Thesis, since the former seldom engages in futile exercises to prove the reality of a non-existent entity. Instead, when Black Nationalist groups talk of a “Black Nation,” they are primarily concerned with what they consider to be a viable process of *building* a nation, i.e., the potentiality of a Black Nation. Thus, one may disagree with them on the point of judgement, but not criticize them on the point of illogical deductions about the past.

A criticism of judgement might have to do with the abstract character of such programs. To be

concrete, the attempt to fashion a nation out of a racial minority would embody a specific program to forge the objective conditions of national existence. Especially on the questions of territory and economy, it would put forth a concrete program of carving out a definite potential territory and mapping out a more or less precise process of constructing a national economy, beginning with its own monetary system, circulation network, and capital construction. Instead of wishing that “this will somehow all work itself out” in some unspecified future, a nation-building program ought to be a concrete proposal for national existence in the objective.

Short of that, “nation-building” becomes a number of purely subjective things. It could be an intellectual stance or an ideological “self-defense”; at any rate, nothing which can be described as process-oriented. Or, it could be a colonization slogan of a “promised land,” a rhetoric which hides the brutal necessity of dislodging some hapless peasants in Africa or elsewhere in the manner of Zionism uprooting the Palestinians. Or, it could be an entrepreneurial thrust to build various self-help cooperatives or business concerns *within* the general framework of U.S. capitalism, i.e., a program of “alternative” enterprises, far short of being an alternative socio-economic system. Finally, it could be a program of “community control” within the prevailing political structure of the present U.S. Even though some of the above may have merit *in themselves* and deserve some support by all, a nation is not built in these ways.

So far, we have assumed that Black Nationalism is primarily or exclusively concerned with nation-building, but this assumption may not be valid. If there is one common theme in the various Black Nationalist manifestoes, it is the need for the solidarity of Black people in the face of racism, even though this need is expressed in the misleading language of national formation. Therefore, we must distinguish the reason for the rise of movements like Black Nationalism from the reason for such movements taking on the language of nationalism, for the two are by no means the same. If we fail to make this distinction, we become susceptible to such voluntarist conclusions as taking Black Nationalism as a material sign that a Black Nation is becoming a realizable prospect, i.e., “an idea whose time has come.” But, as we have learned from Marx and Engels, the rise of religious movements, for instance, is hardly a material sign that the “kingdom of heaven” is about to be realized; instead it may only be reflecting the hell-like condition of reality in this secular world.

That such a large part of the Black movement in the U.S. has assumed the language of nationalism is quite significant and not at all accidental.¹² No doubt, this is a complex question, but perhaps a reasonable answer may be sought by investigating the connection between the national formation of the U.S. and the racial formation *within* it. We must recognize that nationhood is the unity of the objective and the subjective: the *objective* “national life” determined by the political economic relations among its nationals (together with its linguistic, cultural, and territorial setting), and the *subjective* “national spirit” or “national identity” reflecting the material and spiritual benefits of the proposed or realized national life. Note that this dialectic is not always a simple identity.

Black labor has always been an integral part of the “work” of U.S. nation-building throughout its 350-odd years of history. More significantly, this labor has been performed not as the labor of a people in temporary captivity (like the proverbial Israelites in Egypt or Babylon), but as the labor which transformed the laborer himself in his linguistic and cultural capacity. This is *objective* integration in production. Yet, much of the material and spiritual fruit of the U.S. nation has been systematically denied to Black people. In fact, the essence of racism can be best described as a differential proletarianization *within* the bourgeois development of the U.S., as opposed to a systematic exclusion of Blacks from national production. In the 18th century, this meant sanctioning slavery in the midst of the bourgeois emancipation of labor; in the 19th century, this meant driving Blacks out of urban petty-bourgeois trades and rural independent farming; in the 20th century,

this meant ghettoizing “the reserve army of labor” in urban centers surrounded by suburban development. This is *subjective* separation in appropriation. It is not that Blacks are disqualified as workers of the U.S. as a nation, but rather that a formally distinct “subcategory” of proletarians becomes justifiable if its application is exclusively limited to Blacks.

Given this, it is entirely expected that Whites’ monopolized claim of the subjective would meet with a counter-claim by Blacks, even if they must envision a separation in the objective in doing so. In this sense, Black Nationalism is quite similar to the desire of some workers to set up their own utopian colonies or cooperative communes in order to escape capitalist appropriation, if not upturn capitalist production altogether. (The heyday of Black Nationalism in the U.S. has often coincided with the heyday of the non-Marxist socialist movement.) This also explains why Black Nationalism is better nurtured in the northern urban setting than in the southern rural setting, i.e., in a more developed condition of capitalist production.

But the real question for Marxists in the U.S. concerns the attitude toward Black Nationalism rather than a programmatic critique of nation-building. In order to approach this question correctly, we must add one more clarification to the substance vs. self-description distinction previously discussed: namely, the particular vs. the general. In the absence of the reality (or the realizability) of a Black Nation together with the presence of a mass empathy for Black Nationalism, the practical workings of Black Nationalism invariably evolve into a *particular* response to racism. This response might be popularly characterized as “promising” but “incomplete.” For this reason, it becomes a program for *some* Blacks, but not necessarily for *all* Blacks. The problem of racism can be dissolved only by the complete dismantling of the real relation of racism as well as its ideological reflection—racial categories. Black Nationalism does not pretend to aim at this eventuality. On the contrary, it tends to be pessimistic about, if not opposed to, such a far-reaching outcome. On the other hand, the hardship which racism imposes upon millions of people demands many modes of individual or particular responses, of which Black Nationalism is one of the most concerted and concentrated.

Therefore, for Marxists, the question is not whether Black Nationalism has the right to exist or not, nor whether it is *in itself* progressive or reactionary. The real question is how Black Nationalism as a *particular* response may contribute or detract, at a specific time and in a specific context, vis-a-vis the *general* resolution of racism. Given this, in the broader movement to express the urgency of an all-out assault on racism and to mobilize the people to that end, Black Nationalism has been an asset. Even though Black Nationalism could momentarily become a focal point of defections, detractions, and deflections from the general assault on racism, the overall response so far has been one of ready and willing closing-the-ranks in the face of the larger issues of racism. The will to survive in the face of general dispossession is not always an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of dispossession, any more than it is automatically a will to upturn the dispossession itself. Each case demands a specific analysis.

¹¹ It is interesting, to say the least, that Zionism originally staked out its purported “spiritual home,” not in Palestine, but in the then British colony of Uganda.

¹² Consider, for example, the lesser success of the caste analogy and the class analogy.

5. Concluding Remarks

It is no accident that most versions of the Black Nation Thesis have found the period 1865–1930 to be the safest historical juncture in which to posit the origin of the supposed Black Nation. This was precisely the period when racism was at its most virulent height and racial categories, thanks to

Social Darwinism, enjoyed a pseudo-scientific standing. Thus, those theoretical premises required by the Black Nation Thesis were also best found in this era, when racial categories were conceived of as natural categories and racism was described simply as the “social misuse” of such categories.

But, racial categories are too peculiar to be of any use in natural science. The logic of assigning the offspring of Black-White “mixed” parentage as Black instead of White, for instance, can find no scientific justification. In fact, the classification of mankind into races makes as little sense to genetics as the classification of light into three primary colors does to the physics of the electromagnetic wave. The peculiar dialectic in which Whites are required to be “pure” Europeans while Blacks need merely be “contaminated” by a drop of African blood clearly exposes the *social* character of racial categories. This is nothing but a chauvinistic calculus of “pedigree” vs. “mongrel”—the logic of private property inheritance. Obviously, the racial distinction is no innocent classification scheme indulged in by natural scientists.

In light of modern research, natural scientists have more or less abandoned the notion of “natural races” and now devote themselves to the study of genes and DNA molecules. (Fascist scientists, however, are notable exceptions.) In their stead, social scientists have evolved the concept of “social races”; yet, the socio-historical element thus introduced has been unfortunately minimal. The most widespread myth in this connection is the view which takes racism as a spontaneously developed antipathy between European descendants and African descendants, an antipathy supposed to be either rooted in the inherent human psyche (of fearing the strange, mistrusting the unusual, desiring to dominate, etc.) or derived from a long history of separate existence. This view of racism alludes to the undoubted fact that, at the inception of continental contact, Europeans and Africans did recognize the difference in each other’s physiognomy, perhaps even with a sense of bewilderment and distaste. But, from there to the categories of White and Black, the social process is neither automatic nor spontaneous. “White” is not just another name for “European-descent,” nor is “Black” just another name for “African-descent.” In the United States today, it has been estimated that about 70% of Blacks are part-European, and that some 20% of Whites are part-African (i.e., “passing”).¹³ Clearly, there is an unmistakable “dialectical leap” from the European-African dichotomy to the White-Black opposition, from the original antipathy to the reproduced antipathy. Blacks and Whites have lived together for 350 years in North America, long enough to get “acquainted” and to overcome initial antipathy; racism clearly requires something more than a psychic penchant or historic separation.

Indeed, the quality which distinguishes racism from “traditional” ethnocentrism (of religion, culture, nation, tribe, etc.) is faithfully reflected in the dialectic of racial categories. In philosophical terms, the traditional ethnic is *absolute* in its determination (i.e., self-determinate) whereas the racial “ethnic” is *relative* in the sense that “Black” and “White” require each other to determine themselves. In historical terms, this is the language of differing social formational dynamics: the traditional ethnic announces to others the fact of its own inner development, whereas the racial “ethnic” requires the more crucial step of devising physiognomic rules first, then engendering an ethnic-like quality to population blocks so classified. This is the reason why racial categories are widely accepted not only by the excluder but also by the excluded—they have a kind of pseudo-objectivity. In its essential content, therefore, racial formation is a forceful dispossession-disinheritance imposed on a segment of the population for the purpose of rationalizing the systematic denial of certain benefits of social development (for example, the bourgeois emancipation of labor). For this reason, legal statutes like the “anti-miscegenation” acts arose, not as preventive measures against an impending tide of “race-mixing,” but as juridical details of the instituted racial logic, i.e., measures intended to clarify the status of the “grey area” in the Black-White dichotomy and to plug the “loophole” of

marriage and parentage in “race-crossing.” In its more developed form, racism may even engender an appearance of an “ethnic” unity-in-itself to the “cast-off race” through the simple misinterpretation of the organized political formation *against* racism as the incipient socio-political development *for* itself. The cruel edict of disinheritance, “fend for yourself,” is rendered non-chauvinistic by the ideological formula of self-determination, “care for yourself.”

The hallmark of racist theories of racism (theories entrapped by racism-generated illusions) is the habit of thought which takes racial categories as social immutables of one sort or another. It is imperative, therefore, that the method of Marxist social analysis be brought to bear on the race question with due speed and rigor. The Marxist approach to racism would begin with the analysis of the dialectic of racial categories, then proceed to the investigation of the real relations which produced this form of thought; i.e., racism as the unity of race relations and racial categories. In this way, racial categories will be seen as the ideological reflection of those real relations which we now call, *ex post facto*, “race relations.” Given this, the natural in the social of racial categories will be seen as nothing more than a vulgarized conception of human genetic variation, a conception which racism gives birth to and makes use of. Racial categories are racist categories.

The failure to proceed with a dialectical analysis of racial categories puts us in the compromised position of rejecting the *practical* consequence of racism while simultaneously accepting the *theoretical* premise of racism. As a result, the pre-racist past and post-racist future are seen through the tinted glass of the present racist mode of thought, and the historical specificity of the origin and demise of racism becomes hopelessly obscured. Thus, for example, the pre-racist past is popularly seen as a time of “racial harmony,” when in fact the recognition of physiognomic differences had not yet evolved into a systematic classification of “races” with woeful socio-economic consequences. Similarly, the post-racist future is tamely postulated as an era of “racial equality,”¹⁴ which thus presumes the social validity of racial categories even beyond the realm of racism. The similarity with the non-revolutionary critique of capitalism is striking; this critique sees the pre-capitalist past as a “backward” version of capitalist production (with a “naive consciousness” about profit and interest), and postulates the post-capitalist future as a “rational” version of capitalist production (with an “equitable distribution” of capital and labor). Ideological failings always result in the compromised action of an outward assault and an inward worship.

The ideological force of racism is perhaps most awesome in the degree of success with which racial categories have penetrated the contemporary psyche, the extent to which racial categories have become “second nature” in the U.S. One of the peculiar aspects of the American psyche is its incredible acuity in detecting a minute trace of African ancestry, together with its indifferent recognition of a minute trace of European ancestry. This psyche readily recognizes a one-eighth African (and seven-eighths European) as Black, but stubbornly refuses to recognize a one-eighth European (and seven-eighths African) as White. More than that, “a single drop of African blood” is somehow postulated as generating a vast qualitative gap in a person’s cultural attributes and as transcending the “culture of racism.” Even half-brothers are torn apart as “aliens,” despite the fact that they may have been born in the same household, raised in the same neighborhood, educated in the same schools, and versed in the same cultural tradition. In the U.S., the social phenomenon of racism penetrates even the kinship unit of the family.

The thesis that the Black people constitute a nation or a national minority is, in essence, a refurbishment of this psyche—a point of view which also makes a mockery of the objective process of “national life.” Nations have the naturalization process to absorb aliens linguistically and culturally; in the U.S., this process usually takes no more than one generation.¹⁵ By contrast, the whole point of racial categories is to eliminate all possibility of socially acquired crossing, to decree different life-

destinies according to a physiognomic rule which overrides all other social considerations. Giving respectable or non-chauvinistic names like “nation,” “nationality,” or “national minority” to this social edict does not negate the logic of its development. “Mongrel” is not simply a “pedigree of a new type”; rather, such thought is merely another instance of succumbing to the vulgar genetics of animal breeders.

The Black Nation Thesis is, therefore, a more pedantic version of popular misconceptions. In the context of the unproductive dichotomy of separatism and integrationism, the Thesis has not only reflected this dichotomy, but also combined the worst in separatism with the worst in integrationism. The shibboleth about the national territory of the Black Nation is, in essence, an argument for negating the (Black) producer’s right outside of the Black Belt; the shibboleth about the “national minority” status of Black people is, in essence, an argument for affirming the (White) appropriator’s claim as the “national majority” from whom a guarantee of “minority rights” must be begged. In either case, it supports the ideological premise that the national formation of the U.S. is essentially the “work” of Whites, to which Blacks “contribute” incidentally and episodically, and thus adds one more grist to the mythology mill of racist historians.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the current revival of the Black Nation Thesis is that it is probably an attempt to make “multi-national” virtue out of racial vice. The unsavory state of the racially divided organizational workings of the U.S. Left seems to be crying out for a theoretical justification. The lack of a Marxist analysis of racism has long been the Achilles heel through which a chauvinistic approach to the anti-racism struggle has managed to seep into the Left. The inroad of racism into the Left has usually taken the same theoretical route: sunder the dialectic of racial categories, then set the stage for conceiving the anti-racism struggle as the exclusive province of Blacks. This way, Blacks are supposed to be attempting to achieve what the implied “White Nation” is supposed to have achieved long ago. Black Liberation as a “national minority” struggle is merely the most outspoken version of this formulation, a formulation which makes Blacks the gladiators and Whites the spectators in the latter-day Roman arena.

That Black people have a greater stake in the ultimate dissolution of racism needs no explanation. That this urgency will also express itself in a concentrated and organized fashion is also a foregone conclusion. But the isolation of this most determined and organized contingent in the anti-racism struggle as a “Black Affair” would also be an expected racism-conditioned response. The real task facing us here is how to respond to the call of Black Liberation, not how to accommodate it somehow into some dingy cellar of specialization.

Racist thought is probably the most inhuman thought produced by the bourgeois era. In its origin, it carries the bourgeois birthmark, being premised on the dissolution of tribal, religious, and cultural “ethnics.” In its career, its virulency closely parallels the progress of primitive accumulation from Portuguese and Spanish colonies, through Dutch and French colonies, to the English-speaking world. In its death-throes, it has become married to fascist thought. The proven ability of Marxism to smash all the illusions of the bourgeois era must now come to aid us in our effort to keep vigilant against all attempts to reproduce racist thought, in our movement to expose its inhuman irrationality, in our struggle to destroy its socio-economic base.

¹³ Robert P. Stuckert, *Ohio Journal of Science*, cited in Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619–1964*, p. 272–73.

¹⁴ “Racial equality” is, of course, a worthy aim to strive for, but only within the limited confine of rendering racism less virulent; i.e., as a “progressive demand” in the context of bourgeois democracy. But the overthrow of racism will also involve the abolition of racial categories by depriving them of

their socio-economic base. This is not to suggest that “race mixing” is the solution to racism. What is meant by the abolition of racial categories is simply that human genetic variation or geneological diversity would not be pushed into the Procrustean bed of racial distinction. Instead, the genetical and geneological richness of mankind will probably remain, but with this crucial proviso: truly democratic spirit would be completely indifferent to it, due to the absence of socio-economic reason for differentiating, and assign to skin-color the same kind of social significance as weight, height, or hair-color. To promote “race mixing” as a means of social policy is as fascist as prohibiting it. Let such matters as love be enhanced by a social revolution and not be subsumed under “social engineering.”

¹⁵ In this connection, “national minority” (as used in Marxism) and “national origin” should not be confused. “National origin,” as the term is used in the U.S., does not necessarily indicate the fact of an integral life of a self-perpetuating “national minority”; in most cases, it merely signifies one’s geneological episode, “inherited” only in the family-name. A national minority in the Marxist sense would imply the capacity for its continual reproduction, especially linguistic and cultural sustenance, from generation to generation. Given this, in the U.S. today, only certain Indian tribes (now mostly on reservations) and certain self-sufficient religious colonies (now mostly extinct) would come near the Marxist conception of “national minority.” On the other hand, there are numerous “ethnic communities” mainly on the East and West coast, which are in fact half-way houses of immigrants on their way to eventual “assimilation”; they are usually unable to “keep” their U.S.-born offspring for the purpose of linguistic or cultural reproduction, and must rely on a fresh wave of immigrants for their continuation. Matters are vastly complicated, however, when it comes to immigrants from Latin America, especially Mexicans and Puerto Ricans; geographic proximity, the large number of transients, etc. contribute to a certain “viability” in linguistic and cultural reproducibility. However, none of these should be confused with racial ghettos. The latter are sustained from generation to generation, not because of their own inner developmental impulse, but because of the workings of the social economy of the U.S. Immigrant “ethnic communities” are essentially alien elements in the process of being incorporated into U.S. society. For instance, in a generation or so, Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans become grouped into a racial entity: “Asian-Americans” or “Orientals.”

14.3 Congress of African People, Revolutionary Review: The Black Nation Thesis (1976)

The Pamphlet, “Critique of the Black Nation Thesis,” is yet another recent attempt by a group claiming to be Marxist to liquidate the Afro-American National Question and reduce the struggle of Black people to a watered down “moral” and intellectual plea for equality.

The authors are a group of people calling themselves the Racism Research Project. This group gives as their point of departure the need for a Marxist critical analysis of racism in America. However, nowhere in the pamphlet is this analysis given. And, upon reading it you know why. Even in their weak attempt to dispute the existence of the Black nation, Marxism is never used, though they make twisted references to comrades Lenin and Stalin.

The chauvinism in this pamphlet is evidenced by such statements as, “This view has long been identified as the Marxist position on Black Liberation—both because its authors have invoked the name of Marxism...and because no one outside of Marxist Circles has ever seriously espoused it.” Obviously these intellectual racism researchers never bothered to research the Black Liberation

Movement, because they would have discovered that such groups as the African Blood Brotherhood in the early 1900's called for Self-determination of Black People in the old slave south. Or had they really investigated they would have seen that the Nation of Islam, one of the largest Black organizations to exist, called consistently for 40 years for independence and separate statehood for the Black masses in the U.S. using the land base of the slave south as our national territory, all this being based on Black peoples historical development. Or what about the Republic of New Africa, what circle are they in? It is obvious already that this book is a shallow attempt to attack the right of self-determination for the Afro-American people.

But, they do not stop there. They go on to say that upholding the existence of a Black Nation and the right to Self-determination can "serve as a sophistic means of dividing a nation." What outrageous chauvinism! Perhaps the racism researchers would do good to read Lenin and get an understanding that it is not the oppressed nations that have divided the world but Imperialism!

But it is clear that the intent of the racism researchers is not to use Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, to support and/or clarify their position, (M-L-M would only prove this thesis incorrectness). But they only intended to distort and attack the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought.

Check out how they distort and attack Stalin's definitions of a nation, as he clearly and correctly laid out in *Marxism and the National Question*, "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and a psychological makeup manifested in a common culture." What do these racism researchers have to say, "those characteristic features which a nation necessarily exhibits are not always what is sufficient to make a nation." Well, what is; the approval of the racism researchers?

But this is not the end of their attacks on Marxism. They also state, "the Black Belt being the national territory of the Black Nation...and Blacks elsewhere being a national minority...constitutes the "communist" contribution to this muddled debate." But if this is the communist contribution, what or who are they saying is muddling the debate? Because this contribution was not only made by leading American communists, but in 1928 and 1930 the Communist International passed resolutions firmly stating the definite existence of the Black Nation and upholding the right of Self-determination. Again a little research will reveal that the C.I. at the time was under the leadership of the first socialist country the U.S.S.R. headed by Comrade Stalin. Or if the debate is so muddled perhaps these racism researchers think it was Comrade Lenin who muddled it when he said, "In the United States the Negroes...account for only 11.1%. They should be classed as an oppressed nation..." Or maybe it is the fact that the CPUSA when it was fighting to uphold the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism, and took the correct stand in support of the Black Nation's right to Self-determination, registered 10,000 black people in their ranks in one year during the 30's. This is just an opportunist attack on Marxism-Leninism.

The two main areas that these racism researchers use to attack the Black nation, are common territory and common economic life.

The land base of the Black Nation is the Black Belt south and the border areas. What most black people refer to as "down home." In their attempt to dispute the existence of this as our national territory, the racism researchers point to the fact that the analysis is done based on Black peoples relationship to whites, and that the analysis should be made based on the internal conditions in the Black Belt. But what they fail to see is that the analysis is based not on Black peoples' relationship to whites as such, but based on black peoples' relationship to slavery and then to capitalism and imperialism.

They continue to try and disprove the existence of the Black Nation with statistics, saying that

over 45% of the Black population is no longer in the South, and the territory is over 40% white. But the fact that there was a large migration of Black people from the south does not dispute the existence of the nation, and any close look at the migration would show that black people left the south by force, violence (KKK), economic coercion, and the lack of promise of jobs.

The existence of whites in the south no more disputes the existence of the nation, than the existence of Blacks in the north dispute the existence of the American nation. Only people using bourgeois logic as their tool of analysis would make such an absurd statement.

The Racism Research Project contends that Blacks do not have a common economic life. But as we can see through looking at the historical development of Black people in the U.S., it was the emergence of a class structure, a black market created by segregation and served by a Black Bourgeoisie, among black people and the consolidation of those classes through reconstruction and after, that signified a definite common economic life among black people. The Black Bourgeoisie is stunted by imperialism, and kept from reaching the level of some of their U.S. (white) counterparts, but there is still an economic cohesion in the Black Nation based on a developed class structure with a Black market "served" and exploited by a Black Bourgeoisie. Though it is true N.C. Mutual cannot hire as many wage workers or exploit as many blacks as Prudential. But penetration of 3rd World Nations by imperialism is not unique with the Black Belt. And even with employment by the imperialists the wage level and the standard of living is lowest among Blacks, and especially in the Black Belt, where all the workers wages are pitifully depressed by the national oppression of the Black Belt. And even outside the Black Belt that blacks in effect make up an almost separate labor market, even as an oppressed nationality as part of the multi-national working class. The racism researchers contend that there is no Black bourgeois. That they are just the upper-strata of the proletariat. But, the fact that imperialism stifles and prevents the Black Bourgeoisie from getting as large as the American Bourgeois, should not be confused with their role in production and society. The Black bourgeois like all bourgeois own wealth that is used to exploit and this wealth they own comes from their exploitation of labor.

A section of the pamphlet dealing with Black Nationalism, claims that Black nationalism is only the call for Nation Building, and the need for Black solidarity against racism. But again, the racism researchers have negated the historical call of different Black organizations for "land and Power," in the historical homeland. The fact that Black nationalism is indeed a call for solidarity against racism, points to the continuation of the national character of our struggle outside of the Black Belt, and the continuing national character of our oppression even in Northern urban centers where we live in almost exact duplication of the conditions inside of the Black Nation.

The racism researchers refuse throughout the pamphlet to explain that racism is a product of the slave trade and early capitalism, institutionalized as a part of the western capitalist superstructure by the trade in Afrikan slaves. Or that racism is used as a tool that has/does objectively divide the working class, just as it was a tool to keep slaves and poor white peasants divided and just as it is used today to keep the Black nation and Black Nationality (elsewhere) oppressed.

The "Critique of the Black Nation Thesis" is an expose of the rampant chauvinism and anti-Marxist positions that are in the communist movement today. Real communist revolutionaries should expose this pamphlet as a perpetuation of white chauvinism and racism, and move to uphold the rights of self-determination. Because finally the Black nation is not a thesis, it is a fact, and it will be liberated, just as there will be a socialist revolution in the U.S. The revolution will be led by a vanguard communist party, and the party will be built faster by communists taking a correct line on the Black National Question, sweeping aside all chauvinists.

Week 15

The Nation Thesis Spreads

The language of New Communist Movement groups regarding national minorities and oppression appealed beyond a Black audience. The victories of various national liberation movements around the world (the Vietnam War, for instance, ended in a Vietnamese victory around the time all this week's pieces were written) only strengthened the attraction of this politics.

Three groups are represented here from this milieu: the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, a formation that grew out of the Young Lords; I Wor Kuen, a New York-based Asian-American Maoist group; and the August Twenty-Ninth Movement, a Los Angeles-based Chicano-American group which took its name from a confrontation with police at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration. The later two groups later joined to form the League of Revolutionary Struggle.

15.1 Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, National Liberation of Puerto Rico and the Responsibilities of the U.S. Proletariat (1974)

The present stage of capitalism is its highest and final stage: imperialism or monopoly capitalism. The small enterprises of early capitalism have become the gigantic monopolies of today—branches of industry grew and merged with the banks and have carved out a world-wide empire of oppression and super-exploitation.

V.I. Lenin, great teacher of the proletariat, states:

Imperialism is a world system of financial enslavement and colonial oppression.¹

He goes on to say:

The characteristic feature of imperialism is that the whole world is divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressing nations which command colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The overwhelming majority of the world's people belong to the oppressed nations which are either direct colonies, semi-colonies or neo-colonies.²

The aim of this system of world-wide plunder and super-exploitation is to secure ever increasing sources of raw materials and markets, cheap labor and super-profits. This system has brought nothing but suffering and death to the people of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the entire world; while it has filled the pockets of a handful of criminals and murderers.

The Colonies—Reserves of Imperialism

The colonies and dependent countries, oppressed by finance capital, constitute a vast reserve and a very important source of strength for imperialism.³

The imperialists use their colonies as markets to invest their profits, a source of raw materials, cheap labor, and further profits. They also use the colonies as a market to sell their products. In the colonies, the imperialists produce very cheaply what they need and sell their surplus very expensively.

With the huge super-profits they make in the colonies like Puerto Rico, the monopoly capitalists bribe and corrupt the upper sectors of the working class (the labor aristocracy)—and petty-bourgeoisie. These people serve their imperialist masters by trying to win the whole working class to support the imperialists' policies and by promoting racism to divide the working class.

One of the chief causes which retard the revolutionary working-class movement in the developed capitalist countries is that, owing to the colonial possessions and the superprofits of finance capital, etc., capital has succeeded in these countries in singling out a relatively broader and more stable stratum, a small minority, a labor aristocracy. The latter enjoys better terms of employment and is most imbued with the narrow craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. This is the real social 'bulwark' of the Second International, of the reformists and 'Centrists' and at the present time it is almost the principal social bulwark of the bourgeoisie.⁴

Objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty-bourgeoisie and of certain working class strata that have been bribed out of imperialist super-profits and converted into watchdogs of capitalism and corrupters of the labor movement.⁵

In addition, we would point out that under capitalism, crisis of overproduction are inevitable. So many commodities are produced as each capitalist strives for maximum profits, but under the conditions of the exploiting capitalist system, the workers' wages, the purchasing power of the broad masses is held down—and therefore the capitalists can find no market for their products. One of the ways the capitalists try to get themselves out of this crisis is by dumping their surplus products onto the captive markets of the colonies.

Finally, the imperialists use the colonies to obtain manpower to form their armies and fight their wars. Also, the colonies themselves are used for military bases.

Puerto Rico—Colony of U.S. Imperialism

The colonial oppression of Puerto Rico by the U.S. began in 1898 when Puerto Rico was invaded by the armed forces of the U.S.

During the first 30 years of the occupation of Puerto Rico, the U.S. set up a military government to make Puerto Rico "safe" for American business; passed the Foraker Act in 1900 which said that all U.S. laws applied to Puerto Rico, and thus they "legalized" total U.S. control over every aspect of life in Puerto Rico. They imposed U.S. citizenship in 1917 through the Jones Act; this was done against the objections of the House of Delegates, the only elected body representing the Puerto Rican people at the time. They established military bases which today cover 14% of Puerto Rico and use these bases to launch military attacks on the other people of the Caribbean who are

also fighting for liberation, like the invasion of Santo Domingo in 1965 by U.S. troops which were stationed in Puerto Rico.

American corporations began to sink massive sums of capital into Puerto Rico to “develop the island,” thereby bringing all of Puerto Rico’s industry and commerce under U.S. control. Today the U.S. controls production in Puerto Rico and monopolizes trade, extracting raw materials and semi-processed materials at a low price from Puerto Rico.

The U.S. drove small farmers and agricultural workers off the land to build huge plantations for the giant American sugar and tobacco corporations. They kept unemployment very high to guarantee a supply of cheap labor. Today, official statistics of the colonial government report unemployment at 30%. They kept wages low by preventing unionization. Only 1 out of every 4 Puerto Rican workers (25%) is unionized. They justified this by saying that unions “frighten” away American businessmen.

Puerto Rico is under total executive, legislative and judicial control by the U.S. The U.S. has exclusive jurisdiction over all questions of citizenship, foreign affairs, defense, immigration, foreign trade, currency, postal service, communications media, air and maritime transport. By passing laws saying Puerto Rico could not trade with any other countries without U.S. approval, the U.S. has made Puerto Rico a captive consumer; today Puerto Rico is the fourth largest consumer of U.S. goods in the world.

Under the guise of turning Puerto Rico into a “Caribbean showcase of development,” the U.S. implemented various economic plans including “Operation Bootstrap.” Operation Bootstrap was nothing more than an attempt to increase, make easier, and legitimize the economic penetration of Puerto Rico by U.S. monopolies. Under this program, the colonial government exempted U.S. corporations from paying taxes for 10–25 years depending on where they locate their plant.

To maintain the image of a “self-governing” Puerto Rico, the U.S. hand-picked politicians, like Munoz Marin, to rule in their interests. It was this colonial lackey who carried out the U.S. policy of murder and repression against the patriots of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. Today, Hernandez Colon continues this policy of persecution of the independence and workers movements.

Like other colonies, Puerto Rico has provided soldiers for the imperialist armies. 200,000 Puerto Ricans served in World War I. 400,000 served in World War II; 40,000 in the aggression against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 1950, and thousands more in the U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

The colonization of Puerto Rico has meant suffering for the Puerto Rican people. The average weekly income in Puerto Rico in 1970 was \$70. Statistics reveal that 81.8% of the population earns less than \$3,000 a year. Wages in Puerto Rico are half that of the U.S., and the cost of living is 25% higher. Clearly, Puerto Rico has been converted into a reserve for U.S. monopolies that use the Puerto Rican people as cheap labor and exploit the island’s natural resources.

How have the imperialist bourgeoisie profited from the colonization of Puerto Rico?

85% of business in Puerto Rico is controlled by American capital. The profits on these investments amounted to \$83,600,000 in 1959; \$115 million in 1960; \$281 million in 1966. By 1970, these profits had risen to \$583 million.

Where There Is Oppression, There Is Resistance

History teaches us that wherever there is oppression, there is resistance; and the super-exploitation of the colonial and dependent peoples is no exception. In spite of desperate shows of force by the imperialists, country after country has taken up arms against U.S. imperialism; and day by day,

around the world, the fight against imperialism gains momentum.

National wars against the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable, they are inevitable; they are progressive and revolutionary...⁶

In Puerto Rico, too, this revolutionary momentum is growing. The many years of oppression and exploitation of the Puerto Rican nation has also meant long years of revolutionary struggle by the masses of Puerto Rican people—from the 1937 Ponce Massacre, to the armed uprising in Jayuya and other areas in 1950, to the militant strikes by the working class. In 1969, General Electric workers struck in Palmer. This strike was one of the longest and most militant in Puerto Rico's history. In 1972, workers of the American-owned newspaper, *El Mundo* went on strike. The strike lasted 7 months, and was met by intense repression by the colonial state apparatus. In 1973, electrical workers went out on strike, affecting the entire island. Immediately following this, the firemen and sanitation workers in San Juan went on strike.

As his solution to the critical situation created by the three simultaneous strikes, the governor of Puerto Rico, comprador bourgeois Hernandez Colon, called out the National Guard. This had not been done since the 1950 uprising. Increasingly, the workers' struggles are being linked with the independence movement, and the independence movement continues to grow.

Added to this situation has been the militant struggle of the university and high school students, who have confronted the colonial regime with demands around the democratic rights of the students and firm political demonstrations against U.S. imperialism.

In August 1972, the U.N. Special Committee for De-Colonization, after a number of sessions, presented its report and resolutions concerning Puerto Rico. The report said that the Committee:

1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, in accordance with General Assembly-resolution 15H (XV) of 14 December, 1960.
2. Requests the Government of the United States of America to refrain from taking any measures which might obstruct the full and free exercise by the people of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, as well as of their economic, social and other rights, and, in particular, to prevent any violation of these rights by bodies corporate under its jurisdiction.

The report also stated that the U.N. Secretariat would help collect all pertinent information, including "the views of all the parties concerned" for the purpose of facilitating the consideration of the question in 1974; and that the Committee would "keep the question under continuous review."

The people of the world, most especially we, the people of the U.S., must applaud this decision of the De-Colonization Committee, which demands that the U.S. respect the right of self-determination. The report puts the question of the colonial status of Puerto Rico on the U.N. agenda and therefore puts it before the peoples of the world in terms of getting out information about Puerto Rico's historic struggle for national liberation.

However, at the same time, we must understand that the national liberation of Puerto Rico will not come out of the decisions of the De-Colonization Committee. The American imperialists do not recognize any people's right of self-determination. Nor will national liberation come by demanding that the U.S. imperialists celebrate a "Bi-Centennial Without Colonies." Imperialism is a world-wide system of plunder and subjugation. It is the highest stage of capitalism, not a policy chosen by the bourgeoisie. Imperialism can't live without colonies. It is parasitic, and as such it is a blood-sucker, sucking the blood of the world's people. And it is moribund, fighting until its last breath.

The Chinese comrades have said:

Hence, imperialism and all reactionaries must be looked at, in essence, from a long-term point of view, from a strategic point of view, must be seen for what they are...paper tigers. On this we should build our strategic thinking. On the other hand, they are also living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers which can devour people. On this we should build our tactical thinking.

The comrades have made clear that this enemy will not step down from the stage of history on its own accord. No, for in the epoch of imperialism, the contradiction between the colonies and imperialism will be resolved only by the method of national revolutionary war.

The liberation of Puerto Rico must be accomplished by the masses led by the proletariat and its vanguard party, a Marxist-Leninist party, in armed struggle. Today the situation in Puerto Rico is in a revolutionary upsurge—that is the objective situation. However there is still no party of the proletariat and the building of this vanguard party remains the central task for all communists in Puerto Rico. At the same time, the communist forces must lead the masses consciously against U.S. imperialism.

Putting forward such slogans as “Bi-Centennial Without Colonies” does not accomplish this task, and the slogan itself is in contradiction to Marxism-Leninism. It spreads illusions, social-pacifist (socialist in words, pacifist in deeds) illusions, bourgeois illusions. It also belittles the role and responsibility of the communists in Puerto Rico, as well as belittling the responsibility of the proletariat of the U.S.

What is the responsibility of the U.S. proletariat towards, the oppressed nation of Puerto Rico and all other colonies?

Responsibility of the U.S. Proletariat

The responsibility of communists (the advanced detachment of the working class) and the proletariat in the oppressor nation is to first and foremost understand that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.

We must fight for the right to political secession for the colonies and for nations that the bourgeoisie of the U.S. oppresses, i.e. the right to determine their own destiny. For, as Comrade Lenin said:

Failure to carry out this responsibility means that proletarian internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase, and class solidarity between the workers of the oppressed nation and the oppressing nation will remain impossible.⁸

This means that the proletariat cannot and must not evade this most fundamental question. The recognition of internationalism must not be limited to words—and then implement petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism.

Our responsibility is to carry out direct revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass action for the liberation of the colonies. We must struggle against all forms of national oppression and spread propaganda among the proletariat of the U.S.

This is how, concretely, we give aid; how, concretely, we turn the colonies from reserves of imperialism into reserves of the proletariat. For Lenin states that failing to do this is acting like lackeys of “the blood and mud-stained imperialist bourgeoisie.”⁹

We can point to organizations that have failed to do this, that have become instead agents of the bourgeoisie, specifically, the “CP”USA (Revisionist). The “CP” has betrayed the cause of the

class as well as the liberation struggle of Black people for self-determination and the oppressed national minorities for democratic rights. The “CP” advocates “peaceful transition to socialism” and they, therefore, do not call for the armed overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These revisionist dogs have killed the essence of Marxism and, as such, are class enemies of the world’s people.

The “CP”USA is a direct appendage and mouthpiece of the modern revisionists of the Soviet Union, who usurped the party of Lenin, restored the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and capitalism in the Soviet Union. Today, the U.S.S.R. is social-imperialist (socialist in words and imperialist and bloodsucking in deeds) and stands alongside the U.S. imperialists as a superpower, enslaving, exploiting and oppressing the world’s people.

These international revisionists are responsible for the temporary setbacks of the proletariat. They work hand-in-hand with international imperialism and reaction. They pave the way for the reactionaries by creating illusions in the people’s minds about the “peaceful road” to socialism. These modern revisionists were responsible for thousands of murders and slaying of the Chilean people, for it was they who disarmed the masses (both ideologically and materially, by opposing the arming of the masses) and left the masses defenseless in the face of the enemy’s fascist attack.

Internationally, the genuine Bolsheviks, led by the Communist Party of China and the Party of Labor of Albania, are struggling against these treacherous enemies and have firmly drawn the line of demarcation in the international communist movement.

The CPC and PLA have provided the international proletariat with valuable experiences and have upheld the teachings of the great teachers of the proletariat: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. They have staunchly upheld the words of Lenin that the struggle against imperialism is a “sham and a humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism.”

For these reasons, we criticize PSP for uniting with and not struggling against the “CP”USA(R). This is nothing but conciliation with opportunism and class collaboration. To unite with the “CP”USA(R) is to betray the mighty cause of the liberation struggle of Puerto Rico.

Many people have asked, what is the role of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. in these struggles? In the next section, we will address ourselves to this question.

Oppressed Puerto Rican National Minority—Part of Multi-National U.S. Working Class

There is no doubt that in the early stages of capitalism, nations become welded. But there is also no doubt that in the higher stages of capitalism, a process of dispersion of nations sets in, a process whereby whole groups, in search of a livelihood, separate from nations, subsequently settling finally in other regions of the state; in the course of which, these settlers lose their old contacts, acquire new contacts in their new domicile, from generation to generation acquire new habits and new tastes, and possibly a new language...¹⁰

We must also criticize PSP for their “divided nation” theory; they hold that Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and those in the United States constitute one nation. This theory is counter to the Marxist definition of a nation.

A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture...It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics is by itself sufficient to define a nation.

On the other hand, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation.¹¹

We hold that the Puerto Rican nation exists in Puerto Rico, and that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. over the decades have become an oppressed national minority—overwhelmingly workers, we are part of the U.S. multi-national proletariat. We do not believe that the case of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in the U.S. is unique—it adheres to a general historical pattern.

Why do we say Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are an oppressed national minority? Living, working and raising our families here in the U.S., Puerto Ricans form part of the U.S. working class. As part of this U.S. multi-national working class, we are rooted in the imperialist economy of the U.S. and not the colonial economy of Puerto Rico.

Forced to migrate from Puerto Rico, we find ourselves in a different country, living and developing under different material conditions. Trapped in the urban ghettos of the U.S., interacting with working people of other nationalities, faced with blatant racism from the mass media (the propaganda arm of the capitalist ruling class), discriminated against by all the society's institutions (like the schools, courts, hospitals, etc.) and brutalized by the capitalists' armed protectors, the police, we have developed differently than if we were living in Puerto Rico. Our living conditions, our environment, has shaped how we see the world; and in order to survive, we must deal with the stark reality of life and class struggle within the belly of the monster itself.

It is definitely true that we do retain much of our Puerto Rican culture and tradition from the island, and this is a good thing; we must militantly struggle against all attempts to deny us our history, culture and traditions. However, even in this area, we can see some inevitable changes. Take language, for instance. We must continue and intensify our fight for the right to bilingual education. At the same time, we recognize that while older Puerto Ricans generally speak Spanish, we have thousands of Puerto Rican youth who have been educated in American schools where English is the primary language, and we have another generation within the schools today. (48.6% of the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are 17 years or younger, and 31.7% are 9 years old or younger). We find that Puerto Rican youth, educated in the U.S., increasingly use English as their main form of communication. As for the future, we believe that this trend can only be further in this direction, as generation after generation develops in a nation that has English as its official language.

Finally, with a change in territory, environment, the pressures upon us as exploited and oppressed people in America, along with our relationship to other oppressed nationalities in the U.S., our culture, too, is undergoing transformation. We can see this in the way we dress, what we eat, our music, the relationship between men and women, family relations, and political, racial and religious attitudes, etc.

For these reasons, we believe it is incorrect to say, as PSP does, that:

Our Party's General Declaration starts by affirming that Puerto Rico is a Latin American nation with 4 million nationals, of which 2,700,000 live on the island and the rest (more than a third) are concentrated in New York and other places in the United States.¹²

This is nothing but the "divided nation" theory, a theory which is alien to Marxism-Leninism, contrary to the Marxist analysis of what constitutes a nation and how imperialism causes peoples to leave oppressed nations in search of a better life.

We, as the Young Lords Party, once held this erroneous theory, but we have since repudiated it, understanding that it is not in the interests of the oppressed Puerto Rican national minority, the multi-national U.S. proletariat, or the struggle of the Puerto Rican nation.

PSP holds that one part of the nation is in Puerto Rico and another part is in the U.S., and that the two parts are connected by an “air bridge.” This is the theory of Otto Bauer, whom Stalin struggled against. Bauer also said that a nation is “a union of similarly thinking and similarly speaking persons. It is a cultural community of modern people no longer tied to the soil.”¹³ (our emphasis) Bauer, like PSP today, divorced the nation from its soil, its territory, and converted it into an invisible, self-contained force. This resulted, as comrade Stalin puts it, in not a living nation, but something mystical and intangible.¹⁴

The history of the oppressed Puerto Rican national minority has its roots in the colonization of Puerto Rico, which forced 2 million Puerto Ricans to the U.S. in search of a better life. What we found was hunger, humiliation and continual denying of our democratic rights. The racism that was used to justify the colonization of Puerto Rico was used to justify having us slave for the lowest wages and forcing us to live under the most terrible conditions.

This is the life we found in the U.S. We came from Puerto Rico to the U.S.—different territory, language, and different soil. We were now in the multi-national U.S. We were now exploited as part of the multi-national proletariat and oppressed as a national minority. Even the hopes of returning have remained just an idea for the overwhelming majority of us, because the income most of us earn will never make this idea materialize.

There is another important point to note here. Lenin and Stalin pointed out that in a multi-national state, to divide the workers and, indeed, the communists, by nationality weakens the solidarity of the class. The U.S. proletariat must have one multi-national Marxist-Leninist party, not two—with all Puerto Ricans in a separate party.

As part of the multi-national U.S. proletariat, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. have the responsibility of struggling here, in the belly of the monster, alongside the rest of our class, to knock this vicious enemy of the world’s people to its knees and finish it off and dump it into the garbage can of history. This is our duty to the national liberation struggle of Puerto Rico and all the oppressed peoples of the world, because as long as U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism exist, the world’s people can never have a real, everlasting peace.

Ours is the task to struggle against all attacks on the working class and demand freedom of movement for the oppressed nationalities to be able to propagandize and agitate for self-determination, to defend the democratic rights of the oppressed peoples. We know that, in order to do these things, and defeat our enemy, we must also IN DEEDS fight for the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the entire world; and we accept this responsibility and commit ourselves to doing all we can to weaken and destroy our common enemy and to turn the reserves of the imperialists into reserves of the international proletariat.

We dedicate ourselves to the education and organization of the working class, and to the building of the organization that will be able to righteously lead the masses onto the final onslaught against the bourgeoisie—the party of the proletariat. We believe that this is the greatest contribution we can make to the struggle of the world’s people for liberation.

We also believe that the struggle of the entire U.S. working class against the monopoly capitalist butchers, the struggle of the Puerto Rican sector of the U.S. working class against discrimination, for democratic rights and for the liberation of Puerto Rico and all colonies must be led by an ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, and an organization, the multi-national communist party of the U.S., which we must form if we are to be victorious. It is the only way we can combat the attacks of the imperialists, bring forward and train advanced people to be revolutionaries, sum up and learn from our experiences in a systematic way, expose the opportunists that work to keep the working class divided and confused, give leadership to the many struggles of the people, and

link our struggles together, based on a short-range and long-range plan, and ultimately put the imperialists into the grave.

We in the PRRWO, as proletarian internationalists, unite with the Puerto Rican Solidarity Day activity and urge all revolutionary-minded people to come out to extend support to the liberation of Puerto Rico. However, we want to make clear that we do not unite with the slogan, “Bi-Centennial Without Colonies” and most especially denounce the treacherous dogs of the “CP”USA(R) for serving the imperialists by trying to lull the masses to sleep, create confusion, and destroy the revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism. It is our responsibility to defeat all shades of opportunism in order to effectively destroy U.S. imperialism.

To sum up: The world is in great disorder. This disorder propels the development of the international situation further in the direction favorable to the proletariat and the oppressed peoples and unfavorable to imperialism. Wars of national liberation and proletarian revolutionary struggles are raging all over the world. In the camp of the reactionaries, we have contention and collusion between the superpowers as they maneuver to crush the people’s struggles and further redivide the world. On the other hand, the mighty revolutionary upsurge of the masses places the dictatorship of the proletariat on the agenda for the U.S. proletariat.

If Europe and America may be called the front, the scene of the main engagements between socialism and imperialism, the non-sovereign nations and the colonies, with their raw materials, fuel, food and vast store of human material, should be regarded as the rear, the reserves of imperialism. In order to win a war, one must not only triumph at the front, but must also revolutionize the enemy’s rear, his reserves. Hence, the victory of the world proletarian revolution may be regarded as assured only if the proletariat is able to combine its own revolutionary struggle with the movement for emancipation of the toiling masses of the non-sovereign nations and the colonies against the power of the imperialists and-for a dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁵

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD UNITE!
!QUE VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE Y SOCIALISTA!

¹ *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin,

² *Ibid.*

³ *Foundations of Leninism*, Stalin.

⁴ “Thesis on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International,” Lenin.

⁵ “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,” Lenin.

⁶ “The Pamphlet by Junius,” Lenin.

⁷ *Ibid.* [Not in body of text]

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ “Marxism and the National Question,” Stalin.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Desde las Entranas,” U.S. Branch of PSP.

¹³ “Marxism and the National Question,” Stalin.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, “The Bund, its Nationalism and its Separatism,” Stalin.

¹⁵ “New Features of the National Question,” Stalin.

15.2 I Wor Kuen, Revolution, The National Question and Asian Americans (1974)

Editor's Note: "Revolution, the National Question and Asian Americans" is a transcript of a speech by I Wor Kuen to a forum held at the United Asian Community Center in New York City in March, 1974.

Introductory Remarks

We would like to first briefly summarize some of the theoretical study that we have done on the national question, and then discuss our position on the national struggles in the U.S. today, both from a theoretical point of view as well as in the context of practice.

Much of our own understanding of the national question has come not only from study, but from trying to sum up our own practical experiences as well as the experiences of the revolutionary movement in general, and from analyzing the contributions as well as the errors of other groups on the national question. We present our views today with the recognition that our own understanding is still limited and we need to learn much more.

As we go along, then, we hope that sisters and brothers in the audience will recall historical examples and personal experiences that may illustrate some of the points that we are trying to make.

What is the National Question?

The national question refers to the position of Marxist-Leninists towards the question of nations and national minorities in different historical periods, and how that question is related to the working class and the overall revolutionary struggle. It is the question, How will nations and national minorities achieve liberation and an end to national oppression? Marxist-Leninists always stand for the working class as a whole. The working class stands for progress in all situations. Therefore, the position of Marxist-Leninists and of the working class towards the struggle of nations and national minorities has always been an important part of the revolutionary movement. The national question has always been an important theoretical and practical question for the world communist movement.

We would like to begin with a summary of some of the theoretical study which we have done on the national question.

The most important general point that we learned in studying the national question is that it must be examined within the context of a definite historical era. Stalin said that if there was one question that has to be handled in a dialectical and historical manner, it is the national question.

The national question, then, begins in the epoch of capitalism, for nations only arose with the rise of capitalism, and nations will no longer exist in the era of worldwide communism.

A nation, as defined by Stalin, is a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and culture. A national minority is a people dispersed from their homeland and no longer constituting a territorial unit, and/or lacking one or more of the criteria for a nation, while still retaining some of the other characteristics of a people.

The national question, then, can be generally divided into two distinct eras—that of rising capitalism and that of declining capitalism, or imperialism.

In the first period, that of rising capitalism, Stalin noted that in Western Europe, “the process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations.” For example, the French nation was formed from the Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons and others.

In Eastern Europe, however, political states were formed before capitalism had completely overthrown feudalism. Multi-national states were formed, consisting of several nationalities, such as Russia which included Russians, Poles, Caucasians, etc. These multi-national states were ruled by the ruling strata of a dominant nationality such as the Russians in Russia, which subjugated the other nationalities. As the various subjugated nationalities in these multi-national states developed capitalism, and thus a desire to develop into independent nation states, they encountered the opposition of the ruling class of the dominant nationalities. National conflicts and oppression arose.

During this first period, then, the national question was mainly an “internal” question of the young bourgeoisie of oppressed nations in multi-national states attempting to secure their own independence in order to develop their own capitalist economy. It was a question of the struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves for their own self-interest, while the masses of peasants and working people wanted freedom from the miserable oppression that they faced from both national oppression and the exploitation of “their own” bourgeoisie.

During the second period, capitalism developed into Imperialism. With the complete division of the world among the imperialist powers, the national question broadened from an internal question to an international question, which included the question of colonies and semi-colonies. In this period, when capitalism is no longer progressive, the national liberation struggles of oppressed nations are anti-imperialist and revolutionary in character. And with the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, the national struggles became part of the worldwide front of proletarian revolution.

In this second period, it also became clear that only the proletariat of the oppressed nations could lead their struggles to complete victory. Because of imperialist domination, the oppressed nations developed with deformed class structures, with the national bourgeoisies relatively weak and tied in too many ways to the imperialists. Therefore, the national bourgeoisie is too weak and too vacillating to lead the national liberation struggles to completion. But the working class can unite all the oppressed classes, including the national bourgeoisie, against imperialism, and lead the struggle towards liberation. If we look at the examples of national liberation struggles in China and Vietnam, we can see that the working class, not the bourgeoisie, led the united front to victory. On the other hand, in Ethiopia, the national bourgeoisie is presently at the head of the national liberation struggle and is clearly not uniting the various classes of Ethiopian society to lead them to complete liberation. Sharp class conflicts still exist between the Ethiopian national bourgeoisie and the more oppressed classes in Ethiopia. National struggles, then, will develop differently, according to which class is leading the struggle against national oppression, and according to its corresponding class interests.

Despite differences in the national question in the case of nations and in the case of national minorities, the solutions to both are tied to the overthrow of imperialism.

So we can summarize that in the era of imperialism, the national question is part of the worldwide question of proletarian revolution, and struggles of oppressed nationalities have a revolutionary character. We say that the national question is essentially a class question because it is tied to the development of capitalism, imperialism, and socialism, and is part of the overall class struggle of this present period. In the era of imperialism, and especially in the United States, it is most clearly a class question because the national question can be resolved only with a proletarian revolution.

Why is it Important to Study the National Question Now?

It is important because it is the pivotal question that can explain the relationship between our struggle as Asians and the struggles of other Third World people in this country, as well as the relationship between our struggle and the struggle of the masses of working people and progressive people in this country. We all know that the struggles of Asian peoples cannot be separated from the struggles of other oppressed peoples and from the working class. The study of the national question will enable us to clarify what that relationship is, and how we can build towards merging the national struggles and the struggle of the working class into one stream that will overthrow imperialism.

The oppressed nationalities of this country are not an out of the way and unimportant part of the population, but form a crucial sector of the working class. A correct understanding of the class struggle necessitates a correct understanding of the national struggle.

What is the Relationship between the National Struggle and the Overall Revolutionary Struggle?

As we said earlier, this is the very question that the national question is supposed to answer. Following from what we just summarized, as principles of the Marxist-Leninist stand on the national question, our position on the relationship between the national struggles and the overall revolutionary struggle is that the national struggle is a revolutionary struggle, and is part of the general question of proletarian revolution.

Concretely, what does this mean? The first point we would like to make is that the national struggle is a revolutionary struggle because it cannot be resolved under capitalism. We believe what Chairman Mao said in relation to the Black struggle is basically true for the national struggles in general in the United States. He said that, "Racial discrimination in the United States is a product of the colonialist and imperialist system. The contradiction between the black masses in the United States and the U.S. ruling circles is a class contradiction. Only by overthrowing the reactionary rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class can the black people win complete emancipation." In other words, only with the complete overthrow of imperialism can national oppression be eliminated. So long as classes and class struggle exist, national oppression will exist. We can see this very clearly in the U.S. because so much of the bourgeoisie's ability to exploit is based on its super-exploitation of Third World peoples and keeping the working class divided.

Secondly, from the point of view of the entire working class, the working class cannot gain its own emancipation and its own freedom without the elimination of national oppression. As Lenin said, "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations," because the oppressor nation would be perpetuating the very class system which could be used against them as well. In Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels between 1846 and 1895, Karl Marx said, that to the workers of an oppressor nation, the emancipation of subject peoples is "no question of abstract justice or human sympathy, but the first condition of their emancipation." We agree wholeheartedly with this stand. Within the United States, this is certainly true. It is in the interests of the working class to eliminate national oppression, and it is only the working class that can thoroughly do so.

We can see here in the United States, where national divisions and racism is so deep within the working class, that the question of the unity of the working class as a condition for revolution cannot be separated from the fight against national oppression and social chauvinism. It is U.S. imperialism which has continued to draw a sharp line between black and white, which has forced millions of Third World immigrants to its shores, which has pitted workers against other workers

in a scramble for jobs, which blames Third World labor for “runaway” shops and “runaway” jobs, and so on. Each time working people support this vicious system of national oppression, they are actually strengthening the U.S. ruling class’s ability to oppress them all.

To illustrate this point, we have chosen an example from the late 1960’s of the United Black Workers of Mahwah, New Jersey, who have seen the need to fight against national oppression in order to strengthen the struggle of all workers in improve their working conditions. Among the 4,000 workers who were employed at that time in the Ford plant at Mahwah, about half worked on the night shift. Of the night workers, a vast majority were black. As usual, the black workers were hired only for the night shift, because the night shift was certainly the most inconvenient, the most grueling, and the most strenuous shift. They organized the United Black Workers as a national or black workers’ organization, because black workers were the quickest to respond to a call for struggle against the doubly oppressive working conditions. Furthermore, they realized that their union was not going to back them up, and that the rank and file would have to organize a wildcat strike. They walked off their jobs and immediately extended their understanding and their struggle to the predominantly white day shift workers, by leafleting the morning shift, by calling open meetings, and by responding to the common problems of all workers at that plant. Here is just one example in which black workers took the lead, organized as black workers, and united with other workers on the basis of their class oppression to strengthen their entire struggle with the Ford motor bosses.

The third point we would like to make is that the national struggle for democratic rights, against national and racial oppression and discrimination, must be a mass struggle led by the working class. As Liu Truh said, in a pamphlet entitled, “National Question and Class Struggle,” the “national question can only be solved through revolutionary struggle carried out by the broad masses of people of the exploited classes of oppressed nationalities who are the vast majority of its population.” He also said the “the struggle against national oppression is in reality a struggle against class oppression, and often simultaneously, a struggle against the reactionaries of one’s own nationality.” The national question, therefore, pivots around the class struggle, both in terms of its broader connections and in terms of its internal struggle. Therefore, the unity between the exploited and oppressed masses of people of the overall American society is inseparably linked with that of the struggle of the exploited and oppressed masses of people within each of the nationalities.

What are our Priorities in our Work at this Time?

In order to answer this question, we would like to give a very brief outline of the history of our organization.

First of all, we did not begin as a Marxist-Leninist organization.

But we did begin as a consciously revolutionary organization. That is, we sought a revolutionary, total solution to the roots of the problems which we face as Asian peoples.

Our organization, like many others here in America arose as a response to the national oppression and racial discrimination, and as part of the growing anti-imperialist movement in the 1960’s. We formed as an Asian organization because, in 1968–69, the national oppression and corresponding national struggles of Third World peoples was the sharpest in the nationwide progressive movement. Furthermore, the bankruptcy of the Communist Party, USA and Progressive Labor Party, among others, especially in relation to the national question, made joining their ranks out of the question.

Thus, we formed to deal specifically with the problems of Asian peoples as a whole against racism and against the denial of our democratic rights. Here we would like to comment that, although we

consider ourselves to be an Asian organization, most of our mass work has been limited specifically to the Chinese community. This is because we wanted, from the beginning, to root ourselves among the most oppressed and exploited of Asians, and in New York it was in Chinatown that we found a high concentration of oppressed and exploited Asian people.

So, for the most part, our organization worked within the national struggles of Chinese people in the community, of Asian students on campus, and of Asian workers on the job. From the beginning, however, we recognized that Chinatown and other Asian communities were not separated from the rest of society, and that in order to make the fundamental changes which we wanted, we had to unite with everyone who could be united with. Throughout the history of our organization, we have stood for Third World unity and unity with all progressive people. From our earliest activities both here in New York and in San Francisco, such as our film showings and support for the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement at Gouverneur Hospital, or our public stand in mass demonstrations, we have tried to link our struggles as Asians with those of other Third World and working peoples. Other Asians likewise recognized strength in unity of Third World and oppressed peoples in the struggles to defend open admissions and to establish Ethnic Studies at City College of New York, in joining as Asians in Third World contingents at mass anti-war demonstrations, and in many other struggles across the country.

Today, with our greater understanding of the relationship between the struggle of Asians and that of the whole U.S. working class, our present priorities are:

1) to help build the struggles for democratic rights of Asians in the communities, on campuses, and in workplaces, linking up eventually into a united front struggle against national oppression. By democratic rights, we mean the right of Asian nationalities. Chinese, Japanese, Pilipino, and others, to be able to have full and equal rights to develop as a people. That means full equality in status in language, education, culture and other matters. This includes but is definitely not limited to equal treatment of individuals. And connected with that,

2) to help build a revolutionary workers' movement. And last, but certainly not least,

3) to contribute to building a single multi-national communist party. We believe that the national struggles and the working class struggle will never be victorious without the ideological and concrete leadership of a communist party.

Then how do we see building the struggle for democratic rights? As we said earlier, we see building them in a mass way, relying on the working people but uniting all other sectors of the community, especially the petty bourgeoisie, in a broad united front. Concretely, today we are involved in coalitions and working with mass organizations in the community, on campuses and in workplaces, aiming at the struggle against racial and national oppression in a revolutionary way.

In general, we feel that building the democratic struggles means, for example, uniting and fighting for our rights to decent living and working conditions, for political rights, for the right of Asians to go to school and learn their own history as Asians, for the right of our people to maintain and develop our culture. We want to build these struggles, and build them in a mass way.

What then do we mean when we say build a revolutionary workers' movement? As Marxist-Leninists, we see that the leadership of the working class over the democratic struggles will only be a reality when revolutionaries have deepened their roots into the workplaces as well as linking it up to the struggles for democratic rights.

At this time, we see our priority in organizing Asian workers in those place where there are concentrations of Asian workers, so that we can accomplish two things.

1) to involve masses of Asian workers in the struggle for democratic rights, linking up workers issues and community struggles. This is one important way through which the struggles for

democratic rights will come under the leadership of the working class.

2) to involve masses of Asian workers in the struggles on the job, contributing to the development of the workers' movement as a whole. Not to do so would negate the role and importance of struggling against national oppression on the job. We believe that in order to build the workers' movement, we must recognize that the workers' movement is, in fact, split today, and then proceed on that basis to build unity.

Today, our organization is working in many different kinds of workplaces; we are in workplaces like garment and hotel and restaurant, where there are large concentrations of immigrant Asian workers. We are also in strategic industries where there are Asians, but not in such high concentrations, such as the telephone company, post office, mass transit and light industry and hospitals. We are only beginning in this aspect of our work, here in New York and in San Francisco, and our practice is still quite limited, but we see it as an increasingly important aspect in the movement today.

15.3 August Twenty-Ninth Movement, Chicano Liberation and Proletarian Revolution (1976)

This is an updated version of a speech given in August of 1974 by the August Twenty-Ninth Movement.

The August Twenty-Ninth Movement is a multinational Communist organization formed in May of 1974. We take our name from the great anti-imperialist march and demonstration, the Chicano Moratorium Against the Vietnam War. This multi-national demonstration of tens of thousands of working-class and oppressed peoples, and the struggle they waged against the attack by the bourgeois state stands as a shining symbol of the willingness of the people to struggle determinedly against their oppression and exploitation.

Our organization bases itself on the principles of proletarian revolution as summed up by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, and Enver Hoxha. We strive to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism, and ultimately a classless society. This can only occur as a result of a long protracted struggle led by the proletariat under the banner of its vanguard Marxist-Leninist Party.

Today the building of such a party is the central task of all communists and advanced workers of the United States. This has been our task since the treacherous betrayal of the so-called "Communist" Party U.S.A. and their consolidated revisionist role, as social-traitors to the working class.

We stand together with all the world's people in recognizing the leading role of the People's Republic of China and the People's Republic of Albania, the worldwide struggle for national liberation, peace, democracy and socialism. As part of this struggle we are duty-bound to uphold the right of nations to self-determination and to give direct support to the national liberation struggles of the peoples of the world against U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism.

We pledge ourselves to unite with all genuine Marxist-Leninists to carry out our tasks and to fulfill our proletarian internationalist duty.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the great anti-imperialist Chicano Moratorium demonstration of August 29th, 1970 held in opposition to the U.S. imperialist war of aggression being waged against the Vietnamese people, which ended in defeat for the U.S. aggressors.

The historical significance of this anti-imperialist demonstration, the vicious attack launched upon it by the bourgeois state, which resulted in over 400 people being arrested and injured and 3 being murdered, and the ensuing rebellion, was a significant turning point in the liberation struggle of the Chicano national movement in particular, and the working class in general.

This attack by the bourgeois mercenaries on those present at this national moratorium, which included other nationalities such as Puerto Ricans, Asians, Blacks, and whites, was but a historical continuance of the oppression and political attacks suffered by the Chicano people at the hands of the imperialists.

Within the Southwest region, the Chicano and Indian peoples have historically developed under the distinct material conditions of slavery under Spanish colonial rule, and then under feudal relations of production and oppression by Spanish feudal landlords under both the rule of Spain and Mexico.

This oppression, exploitation and historical development was continued and intensified with the seizure of Texas in 1836, and the rest of the Southwest and California in 1848 by the aggressive and expanding colonialism of U.S. capitalism. This seizure was made easier by the traitorous collaboration of the Spanish feudal landlords within the Southwest with whom the young U.S. bourgeoisie came to terms in an alliance against the native peoples.

The period from 1848 to 1883 was one of open terror against the peoples of the Southwest by U.S. colonialism through the use of the army, Texas Rangers, vigilantes and lynchings. The peasantry, peones, small artisans and miners were left to the plunder and murder unleashed by the U.S. bourgeoisie, who “justified” this slaughter and robbery through its class ideology of national chauvinism which took the particular form of white chauvinism and white supremacy against the native peoples. The source of this aspect of bourgeois ideology must be analyzed from a materialist standpoint as emanating from the objective conditions of colonialism, imperialism and the subjugation and plunder of the oppressed nations and peoples of the world by the imperialists and colonialists—particularly the U.S. imperialists (and now, of course, by the restored capitalists of the social-imperialist Soviet Union).

The year 1848 saw the degenerate hacendados—the feudal landlord class of Mexico, represented by General Santa Ana—give away to the U.S. bourgeoisie—California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada and part of Utah. Taken together with Texas, this constituted over half of Mexico’s best and richest territory, an area larger than France and Germany combined.

In the war of 1848, the Mexican bourgeoisie was as yet too small and weak to play a major role against U.S. colonialism, so the Mexican ruling class, comprised mainly of hacendados, capitulated rather than mobilize and arm the oppressed Mexican masses which would have had the effect of destroying their own privileged class position and perhaps furthering the bourgeois democratic revolution (which was carried through within the Southwest by the U.S. bourgeoisie).

Property relations within the Southwest began to undergo, at an increasing rate, radical changes under U.S. colonialism, with the massive influx of poor Anglo-American settlers encouraged by the lure of gold and land and carrying with them the white chauvinist ideology of the bourgeoisie.

The feudal economy of the Southwest, geared to barter and small-scale trade and production to satisfy local needs, represented an obstacle to the greedy designs of the encroaching capitalists who needed to liberate the productive forces.

The bourgeois colonialists invaded under the signboard of “freedom,” which of course meant the freedom of the bourgeoisie to subjugate and exploit on a higher level the propertyless and laboring masses, and to plunder the raw materials of the region.

The U.S. colonialists took possession of the means of production—the land, mines, forests, water

and mineral resources, and began to lay the economic basis for a capitalist system of wage-slavery. The native peoples were driven off the land on a massive scale by force, with homes being burned down, herds of sheep slaughtered and terror used against those who resisted. Peasant plots and sheepland were converted into grazing land for the new capitalist cattle barons, while the native peoples were forced to sell their labor power to their new patrons.

The discovery of gold in California touched off an orgy of plunder and violence rarely equaled in human history. This, coupled with the discovery of copper and silver in New Mexico and Colorado unleashed a human tide from the East, fleeing the capitalist crises of 1847 and 1857 with its resultant unemployment and misery. Their desperation and the rabid white chauvinism pushed on them enabled the U.S. bourgeoisie to use these poor Anglos as shock troops to colonize and consolidate their economic hold over the Southwest region. The political consolidation was accomplished by the use of the bourgeois state through judicial fraud by the courts and implementation of anti-Mexican laws all of which violated the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which stated that the economic, political and cultural rights of Mexicans within the Southwest region would be respected.

One particular example of this use of the state against the native peoples was a land act that was passed which required all guarantees to appear before the Board of Land Commissioners to “prove” their ownership, while colonizing squatters and speculating land thieves were given land outright and not even questioned as to legal title.

Laws, courts, police and taxes were used to try and wipe out resistance—pauperizing the peoples of the Southwest and enabling the new owners of the means of production to freely exploit the land and labor of the region. To increase their accumulation of capital and technology, the colonialists adopted the mining, grazing and farming techniques of the Mexican and Indian peoples.

Thus an extensive new state apparatus was being set up, and a new ideology, that of the bourgeoisie, was forcefully being disseminated—in line with the transformation of the economic base. All this came into direct conflict with the masses within the Southwest region, as the basis for national oppression was laid down and developed.

There is an objective law that where there is oppression there is resistance. The year 1848, when the Southwest was seized by advancing U.S. colonialism, witnessed the heroic struggles of the French and German proletariat in the revolutions occurring in Europe. At this same time, there began the resistance against colonialism and later imperialism by the Chicano and Indian and other laboring people (Chinese, Japanese and Filipino primarily) of the Southwest.

Courageous fighters came forth to wage an intense guerilla struggle against the colonialists; men such as Tiburcio Vasquez, who was eventually executed, and Joaquín Murieta, who when finally captured by the state, had his head cut off and paraded from town to town as an unsuccessful warning to those who would resist.

In Texas, there was Juan Cortina, who with his volunteer army re-conquered much of Southern Texas; and also the struggle in New Mexico led by Elfégo Baca; while the secret organization in the same state—Las Gorras Blancas—waged armed struggle against the colonialists and imperialists up until the 1920's.

With the advent of the Civil War and the confrontation between the developing bourgeoisie and the slave-owning landlords of the South, an important historical turning point was reached. Either the U.S. would progress into an industrialized and bourgeois-democratic society or it would face the domination of the Southern landlords as the ruling class which would have meant an extension of slavery and the restriction of the growth of the productive forces.

From a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the Civil War had a profound historical significance, not only for the developing Afro-American nation within the Black Belt South, but also for the develop-

ment of the Chicano people within the Southwest region. The victory of the bourgeoisie in the Civil War meant that the aim of the Southern landlord class, which wanted to expand slavery into the Southwest and Northern Mexico, was defeated. This was a historically progressive step in that the productive forces were allowed to develop during this pre-monopoly stage and a proletariat began to emerge.

The capital accumulated during the Civil War was part of the basis for building the foundation of imperialism and its beginning penetration of the Southwest through the export of capital to the sources of raw materials and cheap labor within the region. This was to have the effect of creating the material conditions for the Proletarian-Socialist Revolution of the future. The export of capital into the Southwest, especially after the 1880's, began to change the feudal mode of production to a capitalist mode of production by breaking down the old relations of production and allowing the productive forces to develop by freeing the peones from their bondage to the land and the development of communications, railroads, capitalist mining and agriculture, and a money economy based on trade between town and country.

This imperialist penetration brought about a progressive change in the relations of production as new classes began to develop out of the spontaneous, but uneven development of capitalism, with pockets of semi-feudalism still co-existing to this day, such as in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

The U.S. bourgeoisie, as in Latin America and most underdeveloped countries, made an alliance within the Southwest with the Spanish feudal landlord class who saw this as a necessary compromise by which to keep their privileged class position and carry on their traditional exploitation of the working masses. The old ruling-class families, such as the Sepulvedas, Picos, and Figueroas in California, whom the imperialists named our streets after; and the Oteros and Archuletas in New Mexico, found it expedient and profitable to form alliances with the imperialists. In return for selling out the region's raw materials and human resources, these old Spanish families were allowed by the imperialists to control the peones tied to the land, the local peasantry and the Indians, and to share political power on a local basis through the use of economic and political pressure on the exploited masses.

In the period, after the 1880's, the export of capital by developing U.S. imperialism began to penetrate the Southwest region much more heavily as the Southern Pacific Railroad in conjunction with the banking group of Wells Fargo and later Crocker Citizens, which based itself in San Francisco, began to seize control of much of the land in California, as did the Bank of America after the turn of the century. The mines in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado began to come under the control of the Rockefeller and Morgan groups. Much of the land in New Mexico was seized from the peasantry and the Indian peoples by the bourgeois state and turned over to the Arizona and New Mexico Land Company and the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad, both of which came under the control of the Rockefeller group. The land and resources in Texas began to come under the control of the ruling-class group based in Houston. The result of this imperialist penetration was a swift change from semi-feudal relations of production to capitalist relations of production as an industrial proletariat began to develop in the railroads, mines, canneries, and textile mills, and a rural proletariat from the expropriated peasantry. In addition, the old feudal landlord class was being transformed into a comprador bourgeoisie which acted as a middleman for the imperialists in selling the region's resources and people's labor, such as the Otero family of New Mexico whose members developed into capitalist businessmen who traveled widely to the East coast in order to attend bourgeois schools to be groomed as puppets and to convince imperialist corporations to exploit the resources of New Mexico for a cut of the action. Today, we still have their successors in

New Mexico, such as the Chavez's and Mondragons.

With the objective spontaneous development of capitalism within the Southwest, the Chicano people laboured under the crushing weight of imperialist exploitation in the mines, fields, and factories; but at the same time they learned a new discipline that developed through their collective exploitation based on the new capitalist conditions of socialized labor. Chicano workers—both urban and rural—now began the historical task of organizing themselves against this new form of exploitation. These conditions of capitalist exploitation already existed in the Eastern portion of the U.S. multi-national state, and Anglo-American workers themselves were beginning to struggle back as in the Carnegie steel strike and the Haymarket struggle.

One of the first attempts by Chicano proletarians to take an organized stand was in 1883 by forming a union of agricultural workers in Texas and going out on strike which was brutally suppressed. In 1903, sugar beet workers made up of Japanese and Chicano workers' formed a 2,000 member union in Ventura, California and won a bloody strike. Other struggles were carried out with Filipino and Chinese workers whose exploited labor led them to wage bloody struggles against the imperialists.

One of the most far-reaching strikes occurred just South of the 58-year old imperialist border in 1906 and was provoked by the same U.S. imperialist exploitation. The Rockefeller-owned Consolidated Copper Company of Cananea, Sonora, closed down several mines after a drop in the price of copper. Thousands of Mexican miners, who were being paid only half of what Anglo miners were paid in the same mines, were thrown out of work. Ten thousand Mexican miners went out on strike. The reaction by the imperialists was swift and ruthless as a small army of Rangers from Bisbee, Arizona rode in and opened fire on the miners, killing 30. In retaliation, the miners burned down company stores and administration buildings. The participation by the semi-feudal Diaz government in the attack on the miners enraged the Mexican nation and was instrumental in bringing about the bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist revolution of Mexico in 1910, under the leadership of revolutionary nationalists like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata (who were later assassinated by the Mexican bourgeoisie).

1910 also saw striking Chicano railroad workers dynamite the L.A. Times building for its anti-labor stance. 1915 saw the copper miners of Clifton, Morenci, and Metcalf, Arizona strike-only to have the National Guard called out to repress them and jail their leaders.

In 1915, the Plan de San Diego, an anti-imperialist program was formulated by Aniceto Pizano, Luis de la Rosa, and other members of the Chicano revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie, made up of lawyers and small businessmen in Texas. This plan called for an armed insurrection and the establishment of an autonomous republic.

This plan included clauses for the freedom, autonomy, and rights of Indians, Blacks and Asians; on the negative side, it also stated that every white male over the age of sixteen was to be executed. The armed insurrection did not take place, as 28 of the top leaders were arrested, tried for treason; and terror against Chicanos accelerated all along the border with lynchings and shootings carried out, particularly by the Texas Rangers.

In 1917, 1,000 Arizona copper miners were left to die in the desert by Rangers in order to break a strike; and miners at a Rockefeller-owned mine in Ludlow, Colorado were massacred by a private army and the state Rangers.

In analyzing the objective spontaneous mass movement and its ebb and flow, the period from 1900 to 1920 was one of intense proletarian class struggle against the imperialists by Chicanos. The predominant ideological force was anarchism—the ideology of the radical petty-bourgeoisie, disseminated by Ricardo and Enrique Magon in their newspaper “Regeneracion,” printed regularly

in Los Angeles during this period, and by Chicanos who were members of the International Workers of the World—the anarchist Wobblies.

The Bolshevik Revolution, scientific communism, and the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State, the National Question, the necessity for the leadership of the Leninist Proletarian Party, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, had not been brought as yet to the Chicano proletariat and peasantry, a task as yet only partially fulfilled.

World War I hastened the dominance of U.S. imperialism internationally. In 1923, the imperialists closed the political border with Mexico and created the immigration service to regulate the flow of labor. This had the effect of politically re-affirming the inclusion of the Southwest region into the U.S. multinational state and creating a set of distinct material conditions from that of Mexico.

1927 saw the creation of the Confederacion de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas, and the first strike called in 1928, resulting in an attack by the state and the killing, jailing and deportation of the leaders.

The collapse of the capitalist world market in 1929, the shifting of the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class, and the advance of Fascism, brought on a new spontaneous upsurge from the Chicano sector of the labor movement—strikes, strike support committees, unemployed workers committees. However, what was not brought to them was the science of the proletariat Marxism-Leninism, nor a Bolshevized party such as that of Lenin and Stalin to guide them to proletarian revolution.

Tens of thousands of workers struck in the agriculture and canning industries, in berry, onion, celery, cotton fields, and in the railroads and mines. The vicious class nature of the bourgeois state, struggling to preserve monopoly capitalism was blatant as troops were used against strikers, imprisoning the most advanced and class-conscious elements, or murdering them. Over one million Chicanos, citizen and non-citizen alike, were deported by the imperialists in cattle trains and trucks during the depression with the feeble excuse that they were swelling the relief rolls.

What was needed at this point was not more agitation, unity of strikers, nor to build the mass movement, which is something that exists objectively and develops independently of our will. What was needed was to bring the spontaneous mass movement during the 1930's under the direction of revolutionary strategy and tactics based on a Marxist-Leninist program, and guided by a Bolshevized and steeled party based in the proletariat and under proletarian leadership. This was not done; instead we had the right opportunism and white chauvinist leadership of the CPUSA, under the leadership of the petty-bourgeoisie and the class collaborator, Earl Browder.

The only way for U.S. imperialism to get out of the crisis they found themselves in was by another re-division of the world through another imperialist world war. The rising worldwide militancy of the working class was met by the most aggressive forces and tactics of finance capital during the 1930's. Waves of fascist terror and the open dictatorship of reactionary and chauvinist finance capital swept Europe, made easier by what Georgi Dimitrov called the treacherous class collaboration of the revisionist and social-democratic parties who disarmed and split the ranks of the working class and facilitated the fascist takeover.

As the second Imperialist world war developed, Chicanos were sent off to fight overseas under the lure of the bourgeois propaganda that they were "Americans" and it was their duty to go. Well, as their reward they were given pieces of painted rag called the Medal of Honor; while in Los Angeles, the bourgeois, press, looking for a scapegoat after the internment of the Japanese began to stir up a vicious anti-Chicano campaign zeroing in on the issue of gangs, violence, crime, etc., and stating that Chicanos are biologically prone to violence and carrying knives. Backward sectors of the Anglo population were egged on to action and violence against Chicanos along with the police,

sailors and soldiers, resulting in the so-called “zoot-suit riots” and martial law.

The demand for increased labor brought about an agreement between the U.S. and the neo-colonial government of Camacho. In 1944 Mexican braceros harvested over \$432 million worth of crops.

With the end of the Second World War and the brilliant victory of the Anti-Fascist United Front led by the Soviet Union, the Bolshevik Party and Joseph Stalin, full employment in the U.S. began to fade and a “recession” set in along with an offensive against the working class ushered in by the McCarthyite period. The bourgeoisie was able to do this as the revisionist leadership of the CPUSA had liquidated the party in 1944, stating that there was no longer any class struggle and that the U.S. bourgeoisie was still a progressive bourgeoisie. Thus, the working class and the trade unions were left ideologically and politically disarmed, leaderless, and open for attack. Although the party was later reconstituted, its line remained basically the same—right opportunism, which later consolidated into outright revisionism.

The end of the Second World War also saw a new rise in the Chicano national movement and the struggle for democratic rights led by the petty-bourgeoisie. Petitions, voter registration drives, running candidates, etc. were initiated by such organizations as the League of Latin American Citizens, Community Service Organization, and the GI Forum.

In 1947 the farm workers struck in Arvin against the DiGiorgio Fruit Company only to have the strike broken by the bourgeois courts, while hundreds of workers were deported to Mexico.

With the war of aggression against the Korean people and the subsequent defeat of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys by the People’s Army of Korea and volunteers from the People’s Liberation Army of the People’s Republic of China. Public Law 78 was enacted by Congress in order to again import workers from Mexico.

With the end of the Korean War, the imperialists launched “Operation Wetback” which deported another million citizens and non-citizens alike to Mexico; again, the working class being left politically disarmed and leaderless by the reformist CPUSA, who after the death of the great 30-year leader of the international Communist movement, Comrade Stalin, now took an outright revisionist stand, siding with the bourgeoisie and the Trotskyites in attacking Stalin which, as the Party of Labor of Albania states, “was but a cover for the revisionist attack on the need for a proletarian party, armed struggle, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Vietnam and the Chicano Movement

Contradiction is universal, and as the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and people of the world began to intensify during the early 1960’s, with imperialist aggression against Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Santo Domingo, the Mid-East, the Congo, etc., the national oppression within the U.S. multinational state also increased as did the struggle against it.

With the defeat of the French imperialists in Viet Nam in 1954 by the national liberation forces under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the U.S. imperialists under Eisenhower stepped into the place of the French. They halted the free elections called for by the Geneva Accords, which were to be held in 1956 with the purpose of reunifying the country, and began to unleash a war of aggression which ended in their final defeat by the Vietnamese people in April of this year. The inherent contradictions of imperialism became accentuated during the 1960’s with its falling rate of profit, anarchy of production, and the struggle for the re-division of the spheres of influence such as in Indo-China. To finance the imperialist war of aggression in Viet Nam, the U.S. bourgeoisie was forced to print billions of dollars which eventually led to dollar devaluation, to rampant inflation

and to an intensification of the exploitation of its colonies and neo-colonies and the multinational proletariat and oppressed peoples at home.

The Viet Nam war provoked a rising tide of protest which eventually assumed an anti-imperialist character opposed to the rising war costs, national oppression at home, and the slaughter of the Vietnamese people and the sons of the U.S. workers sent to fight there, especially the large percentages of Asian-Americans, Afro-Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans and Puerto Ricans who were the main cannon fodder for the imperialist army in relation to their proportion of the population.

In reaction to the increased national oppression at home, rebellions, and not “criminal riots,” as the bourgeoisie likes to call them, began to break out everywhere as ghetto and barrio residents began to attack bourgeois and petty-bourgeois owned rip-off businesses, and their immediate oppressors—the police—who were increasing in numbers as the repressive apparatus of the state became more centralized and strengthened to deal with the growing militancy of the movements of the oppressed nationalities.

On August 29th, 1970, 15,000 people marched through the east side, of Los Angeles, California, the largest Chicano barrio in the United States, in a militant demonstration against the imperialist war in Viet Nam. But this march had a distinctive feature to it which differentiated it from the many other anti-war protests of the '60's and early '70's it was a march initiated by an oppressed nationality, the Chicano oppressed nationality—to protest specifically against a particular manifestation of their national oppression. They were protesting against the imperialist war itself, the extremely high percentage of Chicanos drafted, wounded and killed in the war and against the overall oppression of Chicanos—the denial of their democratic rights. The central theme of the march was “Raza Si, Guerra No!” The march itself was multinational and largely of working class composition. The large majority of the marchers were Chicanos.

The Chicano Moratorium was originally the idea of the Brown Berets—a Chicano nationalist organization with a working class and lumpen make-up. This organization had been in the forefront of many of the Chicano struggles in Los Angeles—particularly around the questions of white chauvinism in the schools, police brutality and armed self-defense of the Chicano people. The group later assumed an anti-communist, narrow nationalist stance and degenerated into such adventuristic posturing as the “seizure” of Catalina Island “for Mexico.”

During the planning stages of the moratorium, the leadership rested in the hands of revolutionary anti-imperialist Chicano nationalists from the petty-bourgeoisie. They immediately came under attack from the trotskyite Progressive Labor Party which condemned the leadership as “reactionary” because of the “stress” on the question of Chicano national oppression. After some fierce struggles, these trotskyites were defeated politically in the eyes of the Moratorium committee, and were physically ejected. The PLP, typical of all social-chauvinists, had attempted to counterpose the Chicano national question to the working class question. Our stand as communists must be to give firm support to all anti-imperialist national movements because they are, in essence, a component part of the class question in the United States and of the world revolution. The liberation of Chicanos from their oppression can only finally be achieved with the overthrow of U.S. imperialism—the same enemy of the U.S. working class. The working class itself cannot achieve victory without a firm alliance with the oppressed nationalities of this country.

The demonstration itself was met by the full fury of the state. Under the pretext of being “called in to make an arrest” the Los Angeles police department began to tear gas and club the assembled crowd as they sat in an east side park listening to the speakers. Many hundreds were arrested and injured, three Chicanos were brutally murdered by the state. But the assembled masses proved the historic law that “where there is oppression, there is resistance.” Taking on their attackers with

whatever weapons they could find, the people quickly launched a counter-offensive—setting fire to police cars and forcing the police to retreat under a hail of bricks, rocks and bottles. What began as a police riot soon turned into a spontaneous rebellion against the state. Precisely because it was spontaneous, because it lacked communist leadership, the rebellion lacked a plan, specific tactics against a clearly defined enemy for a clearly defined objective. Instead the attacks focused on the most clearly perceived targets—the cops and rip-off businesses in the area. This does not in the least alter the significance of this rebellion or take away from the unquenchable courage of the Chicano people in their march towards freedom. Our task is to build the party of the proletariat which can lead such rebellions, make them most effective in their assault on capital.

In spite of the state repression, more Chicano moratoriums were organized—on January 5, 1971 and January 31, 1971. On January 31st, the state again unmuzzled its dogs—the police. They shot down twenty-two people and killed one marcher. They set up barricades and fired without warning on the marchers. Let the revisionists tell the Chicano people about “peaceful transition to socialism.”

Some Lessons to be Learned

All of these demonstrations were of a decidedly anti-imperialist character and were organized without communist leadership. The Revolutionary Union, which makes as one of its strategic goals the development of “anti-imperialist consciousness” regardless of the level of consciousness of the most advanced members of the mass movements should learn from this. The task of communists in this country in this period of party building (and we are still in it despite RU changing its name to Revolutionary Communist Party) is to raise the level of consciousness of the most advanced to the level of communist consciousness. We must lead the spontaneous struggles with a clear picture of our goals: to test the political line in order to develop it further and forge the unity of Marxist-Leninists; to do agitation and propaganda in the course of the struggle; to link up with the most politically conscious elements and to train them and win them over—theoretically through the study of Marxism-Leninism, politically through the application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of the struggle in order to give that struggle revolutionary direction: organizationally how to organize a struggle effectively—HOW to know whom we must unite, who to neutralize and who to oppose; HOW to use all available forces so that they feel a useful part of a common effort towards a clear objective. All of these taken together serve to win over the advanced ideologically to the proletarian stand and outlook. We cannot take the line of least resistance of seeing “training” as having a worker sit passively through a meeting, or paint a picket sign or walk a picket line. Our goal is to train a vanguard! To do so requires theoretical, political and organizational work. Bolshevik cadre do not “fall from the sky,” they are forged on the anvil of class struggle.

National Liberation Struggles—Component Part of World Revolution

National wars against the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable, they are inevitable, they are progressive and revolutionary. (V.I. Lenin)

The era of imperialism is marked by, among other things, intensified national oppression. From a progressive capitalism which in its lower stage once stood for the freedom of nations, and fought for this freedom from the feudal yoke, has developed into moribund capitalism—whose economic decay and parasitism is reflected in the subjugation of nations with the resultant plunder and exploitation. From a thriving pre-monopoly capitalism has come a dying monopoly capitalism. From free competition to monopoly, from democracy to reaction. Historically in the United States, various

different peoples have been oppressed above and beyond class oppression. Afro-Americans in the black-belt south have been forged into an oppressed nation in the heat of their struggle against this oppression. Black people have not only had to face the robbery of the fruits of their labor—but also murder, lynching, rape and a denial of their basic democratic rights. Their nation is not free and independent, but is strangled and chained by U.S. imperialism. The bourgeoisie, attempting to maximize its super profits, superexploits this people beyond “normal” class exploitation. The Chicano people have faced this same enemy doing the same thing. (ATM is referring here to the national oppression of Chicanos—their oppression as a nationality. Because of this, three important things occur (1) the superprofits strengthen the hand of the bourgeoisie—the wealth they amass is, as Marx called it “concentrated social power” which puts the entire political, military, cultural, etc. apparatus of society at their disposal. The only purpose of this apparatus is to maintain the capitalists in power, to expand and strengthen their domination over the proletariat) (2) The oppressed peoples have awakened to national struggles; (3) The oppressed masses, and the proletariat are divided along national lines—between oppressor nation and oppressed nationalities. With their superprofits, the ruling class extends temporary meager privileges to the proletariat of the oppressor nation, to the Anglo-American proletariat—and drills them with the ideology of racism and national white chauvinism. Thus, since the only strength of the oppressed lies in their numbers, which must be united and organized if they are to overthrow capitalism, the bourgeoisie must maintain the historical national divisions among the proletariat and oppressed peoples. So we can see that the unity of the working class and oppressed nationalities—the unity of the class and national struggles, is not a liberal unity based on guilt or Christianity, but on the solid foundation of definite material interests—to overthrow a common enemy. It is the task of communists to make the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities CONSCIOUS of this material basis and to help forge their ACTUAL fighting unity. It is in this context that we must examine the struggle of the Chicano people and determine what tasks lie before us.

Some Trends in the Chicano National Movement

The leadership of the Chicano national movement historically has been the petty-bourgeoisie such as landlords and landowners, intellectuals, small businessmen, who, oppressed by imperialism turned to either radical politics such as anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism which existed as strong tendencies in the early history of the movement or reformism geared to-receiving an equal share of the imperialist pie—the superprofits stolen from the exploitation of the colonies and neo-colonies.

During the 1960's, various forms of struggle and forms of organization arose within the Chicano national movement representing various ideological trends, classes and strata.

The Chicano peasant based in New Mexico and Colorado, has historically fought a bloody struggle to keep hold of and regain communal and private lands stolen from them by rich capitalists or the state. This struggle of the peasantry for the land guaranteed to them by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (the treaty ending the Mexican-American War), developed the organization known as La Alianza Federal de Mercedes headed by Reis Lopez Tijerina. After a series of legal battles over a number of years, members of the Alianza armed themselves and seized a portion of their historic homelands (settled as far back as the 1600's). This struggle had the mass support of the peasantry of the Southwest and Chicanos of all classes and strata. It was aimed at the imperialist state and expressed its open solidarity with the struggles of the Afro-Americans.

The bourgeois state reacted viciously against the Alianza—mobilizing the national guard against it, jailing many of its members, infiltrating its ranks to cause disruption (through the use of rumors

and provocateurs), and buying off certain of its leadership.

The movement of the peasantry still exists in the U.S. in 1975 although the peasantry is on the decline as a sector of society. We cannot ignore this movement. A peasantry also exists in the oppressed Afro-American nation. What the peasant movement has lacked historically and what it lacks now is the leadership of a communist party which can link their struggles to the struggles of the proletariat and other oppressed peoples. A party which can give the movement consciousness and direction. One of the tasks of our new party will be to develop a precisely formulated agrarian program in order for it to be ABLE to lead the peasant movement.

It is not within the scope of this paper to do a complete class-political analysis of the Chicano people. However, our limited research and experience lends us to believe that the Chicano bourgeoisie is still represented politically by the Democratic Party—a party of the monopoly capitalists. This sector of Chicanos continues to push its programs of reforms and “brown capitalism.” Any work among the Chicano national movement cannot ignore the Chicano bourgeoisie as they still have considerable influence among many working class and petty-bourgeois Chicanos.

La Raza Unida Party—Political Representative of the Chicano Petty-Bourgeoisie

The political representative of the Chicano petty-bourgeoisie would seem to be the Partido La Raza Unida. This is a mass party with centers in Los Angeles, California, Denver, Colorado and Crystal City, Texas. La Raza Unida Party has played a significant role in the Chicano movement. It has reflected the continuous struggle between reformism and revolution, of the Chicano movement. The two-line struggles within the Partido crystallized at the historic national convention of 1972 held in El Paso, Texas. At this convention, the line of reformism and accommodation with the Democratic party was championed by the leadership of the Texas delegation.

The banner of political independence from the two bourgeois parties and anti-imperialism was carried by the California delegation. After bitter struggle, the Partido adopted the path of political independence and of firm struggle against U.S. imperialism. The successful fight was led by the Marxist-Leninist forces within the California delegation who struck an alliance with the revolutionary nationalists from California and Colorado and New Mexico. The basis of this alliance was revolutionary politics versus reformist politics. It was not, as some have said, a struggle between narrow nationalism and internationalism. In fact, a close examination of the recent Chicano movement discloses that reformism and not narrow nationalism is the greater danger. This illustrates the danger of proceeding from formulas—i.e., within every national movement, the greatest danger must always be narrow nationalism.

Following this convention, the Partido adopted the program of the California delegation which called for self-determination for Chicano and other Latino peoples. It also pledged support to all oppressed peoples of the U.S. and the Third World. Thus, the most progressive political representatives of the Chicano people had chosen the path of steel to steel battle against imperialism in solidarity with all oppressed peoples of the world.

From the beginning the Raza Unida Party was weakened by its shallow roots within the working class. Its base mainly came from the intelligentsia and the petty-bourgeoisie. In the struggle between revolution and reformism, the Marxist-Leninists made certain “left” errors of failing to carry on their work patiently, of failing to make distinctions between advanced, intermediate and lower strata elements, etc. They also made right errors of failing to develop a scientific program of work for the Partido, thereby leading to spontaneity. Seeing the need to develop strong ties with the proletariat at the workplaces, and also to develop the highest form of proletarian organization—the Party—the

Marxist-Leninists made the decision to discontinue their work in el Partido. However, this can only be a temporary absence. In the 1972 national elections, over 200,000 votes were cast for La Raza Unida Party in Texas. In Colorado, numerous Chicanos support the work of La Raza Unida Party. While its base is much weaker in California, many Chicanos still look to the Partido for leadership. Of course any communist work in La Raza Unida would be done to give it revolutionary direction and link it to the struggle for proletarian revolution.

Presently, there are three tendencies existing within La Raza Unida Party—in California, the leadership of the Partido is anti-imperialist but caught up in reformist electoral work and “community control” issues. Colorado has various trends within it—socialists, nationalists, revolutionary nationalists, and reformists—but the character of the party’s work centers around the struggles of students, prisoners and “community control.” Both California and Colorado reject affiliation with the two bourgeois parties. Texas represents the more conservative wing of the Partido. Jose Angel Gutierrez and his clique covertly compromise with the Democratic and Republican parties in order to get funds and “special projects.” This clique is anti-communist and strikes an anti-imperialist pose when “the situation calls for it.” However, within the Texas Partido, there are contradictions and struggles, as the more progressive, honest and politically conscious elements see through the program of the Gutierrez leadership and begin to assert their independence from it. Communists must be able to utilize these distinctions to develop the progressive elements, win over the middle and lower strata and isolate the die-hard reactionaries.

As for the proletarian elements who left the Partido—many of them participated in the founding of ATM or have become members of other communist organizations. As representatives of an oppressed nationality as well as of the working class, they have the duty to seek out and win over the advanced elements from the proletariat and from the Chicano national movement. They must also work to unite the Chicano sector of the proletariat with the entire multinational working class and to fight for the leadership of the proletariat in the Chicano national movement. The Chicano proletariat, urban and rural, has now moved into a position to take this leadership due to its role in relation to the most advanced form of production, especially basic industry within the Southwest and the West Coast.

Since the turn of the century, the Chicano proletariat has increased tremendously—Chicanos constitute large percentages, almost majorities, in railroads, steel, construction and the refinery industries in the Southwest. In the period from 1900–1950, Chicanos came to comprise over sixty percent of the proletariat in the mines, the canneries and the packing sheds of the Southwest. This sector of the proletariat shown its capacity for unity, organization and militancy in the heroic struggles of the Farah strikers and the struggles of the Farmworkers of California and Texas.

Our task is to build the Communist Party which can develop a correct analysis of the classes in the United States; a party which can correctly apply Marxism-Leninism to the national question and determine correct program, strategy, tactical line and policies in regard to the various classes and strata of the different national movements. Such policies have as their aim, the uniting of all struggles into a mighty tidal wave of revolution which will shatter the crumbling bastion of imperialism and build in its place a just socialist society founded upon the firm alliance and unity of the working class and the oppressed nationalities. To do this we must isolate the reformist danger in the national movement and also the growing revisionist and conciliationist danger which wants to divert the revolutionary nationalists onto the path of reformism.

Let all communists and advanced workers redouble our efforts to master Marxism-Leninism, to apply it to the conditions of the U.S. and to develop the line and program which can unite us all to carry out our struggle.

LONG LIVE THE STRUGGLE OF THE CHICANO PEOPLE!!! WORKERS AND OPPRESSED
PEOPLES OF THE WORLD UNITE!!! MARXIST-LENINISTS UNITE!!!

Further Reading

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (Free Press, 1998) – a sociology of the Reconstruction Era

Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919 - 1929* (Haymarket Books, 2015) – a history of the early CPUSA; contains several chapters on the development of the CPUSA's stance on Black issues

Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Univ Of Minnesota Press (1978) – the autobiography of the CPUSA's leading theoretician on Black issues

Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (University of Illinois Press, 2004) – a history detailing the CPUSA's organizing in Harlem during the 1930s

Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990) – reviews the CPUSA's organizing in the South during the 1930s

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Ballantine Books 1992) – the widely-read autobiography of the Black nationalist intellectual

Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (Verso, 2002) – the definitive history of the New Communist Movement

Marvin Surkin and Dan Georgakas, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (Haymarket Books, 2012) – chronicles the LRBW and the milieu surrounding it

Ahmed Shawki, *Black Liberation and Socialism* (Haymarket Books, 2006) – a short survey of revolutionary Black history

Appendix

Volumes from the Communist Research Cluster in the *Communist Interventions* series:

Volume I: European Socialism and Communism

Volume II: Black Revolutionaries in the United States

Volume III: Revolutionary Feminism

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